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Volume IX JUNE 15, 1926 Number 5

CONTENTS

COVER DESIGN ..... FRED T. EVERETT.....
THE CRIMSON ROBE..... ELIZABETH HERRICK..... 515
Complete Novelette
WATCHMAN OF THE WILD..... HAROLD DE POLO..... 529
Short Story
THE MOST MYSTERIOUS HAPPENING IN MY LIFE. ALICE BRADY 540
No. 10 of a series of true mystery stories by famous people of stage and screen as related to BIDE DUDLEY
THE MURILLO MYSTERY..... BEULAH POYNTER..... 544
Two Part Story—Part I
THE ADVENTURE OF ADVENTURES..... DALE COLLINS..... 581
A PETER LAMB *Story*
GOLD ..... NEIL MORAN..... 589
Short Story
STILL WITHIN THE LAW..... BAYARD VEILLER..... 596
Three Part Story—Part II
ON THE FIFTH NIGHT..... J. FRANCIS KING..... 611
Short Story
GHOSTS I NEVER MET..... WOLCOTT LE CLEAR BEARD.... 621
Special Feature Article

MISCELLANEOUS

THE HAND OF GLORY..... 514
THE BISHOP AND THE PHANTOM MONK..... 528
THE MAGIC SUMMONS..... 588
VAMPIRE FURNITURE..... 610

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The Hand of Glory

Open, lock, to the Dead Man's knock!
Fly, bolt and bar and band!
Nor move, nor swerve, joint, muscle or nerve,
At the spell of the Dead Man's hand!
Sleep all who sleep!—Wake all who wake!—
But be as the dead for the Dead Man's sake!

THE author of the Ingoldsby Legends was only rendering into verse a wide-spread belief of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries that no door however secure was proof against the thief armed with the Hand of Glory.

This was the hand cut from a man hanged on the gallows, treated in such a way as to convert it into an infernal candle. Once the fingers were aflame, doors flew open and the residents of the house were lulled to a sleep as heavy as that of the dead.

The hand was prepared in the following manner:

After being cut from the criminal on the gallows, it was wrapped in a piece of winding sheet which was drawn tight so as to squeeze out the little blood remaining. It was then placed to pickle for two weeks in a jar containing salt, saltpetre and pepper all thoroughly dry. After this period it was dried in the sun and a fatty application soaked into it.

THERE are many stories of the use of the Hand of Glory. This is one of them:

One dark night, after the doors of a lonely inn on a barren moor had been closed, there came a tap. The door was opened by the landlord who found the visitor was a beggar who pleaded for a night's shelter. He was told he could lie on a mat in front of the kitchen fire.

The household went to bed, all but a serving maid who could see into the kitchen through a pane of glass in the door. Hearing the beggar stirring, her curiosity led her to peep at him.

She was amazed to see him take a brown withered hand from his pocket and set it in a candlestick. He then anointed the fingers and applying a light to them, they began to burn like tapers.

Filled with horror, the maid ran up the back stairs and tried to waken her master and the tapster and others in the house, but all in vain.

The beggar held his candle before locked cupboard doors which flew open at once, and in a sack collected all the valuables of the house. He set the hand on the table and went into an adjoining room.

THE instant he was out of the kitchen the maid ran in and tried to blow out the flames which flickered at the finger ends. Finding her breath had no power, she dashed beer and then water over the devilish tapers, but still without any effect.

At last she poured a jug of milk over the hand. The flames went out. With a shriek she darted at the door of the room in which the thief was and locked him in.

From above came the shouts of the men now released from the spell. They tumbled downstairs, the landlord with his blunderbuss, and the thief was secured.

A week later, new fruit hung upon the gallows-tree of the moor.

The Crimson Robe

By ELIZABETH HERRICK

(Author of "Witness," etc.)

A NOVELETTE

IT lacked forty minutes of the hour set for Paul Leland's second lecture when Dénise directed her chauffeur to drive to the Auditorium. It was thirty-four when the big Rockland slowed to a standstill in front of the municipal buildings.

It was too early for the great bronze doors to be opened to the public so Dénise went in by a side entrance, open a half-hour earlier to accommodate holders of season tickets.

As yet, however, no one had arrived, but Dénise knew that Paul, according to his custom of arriving in time to "adjust" himself, as he called it, mentally and socially, before beginning a lecture, would be already in the dressing-room.

Before going in to him, she sat down in one of the chairs a minute to adjust *herself*, for her heart was beating rapidly and her breath coming a thought quicker at the consciousness of Paul's proximity.

Dénise and Paul had met and loved and engaged to marry a twelve-month before, but between them and their wedding-day Dennis, Dénise's twin-brother, had interposed a seeming *impasse*. Because of his quiet but determined opposition, the wedding-day, twice set already, had been twice postponed.

Then, just when it seemed that Christmas would witness a holly-and-mistletoe ceremony, Dennis had put it over a third time, indefinitely, by dying. To the impatient Paul the *impasse* seemed insurmountable.

The grief-stricken sister could not apparently entertain even the thought of a union that had so disturbed her brother. But as grief wore away with the winter, and spring came, with its tender urge to all living things, Dénise's healthy young heart rebounded and she yielded to Paul's aggrieved importunity.

At last, it looked as if they were really to be married. The wedding-day was but two weeks off come Tuesday, and, as Dénise sensed afresh its nearness, a color delicate as the spring apple-buds blossomed in her cheeks.

She wondered if Paul was thinking of it, too, and if his heart was also stirring as strangely and deliciously as her own. Then, immediately, she was ashamed of the thought and convinced of her own unworthiness to be the wife of so good and great a man.

At this very moment, when she was eagerly and palpitatingly anticipating the tender joy of their wedding-day, Paul's thoughts were doubtless centered on this retrograde humanity he was trying to lift to a higher plane. Humbled in spirit, Dénise endeavored to contemplate the larger picture—a union not alone of love but of effort.

She tried to see herself Paul's real

helpmate—co-worker with him in his untiring efforts to bring the best in social and civic life to the foreground, to wrestle with and throw the worst, as he was preparing to wrestle today with the problems of his own city, notoriously corrupt in its politics and, Dénise feared and Paul openly charged, in its social and very family life.

"THERE is no family today," he had thundered last Wednesday from this very nostrum. "The home is a hotel to the rich—a rooming-house to the middle-class. A citizen is more truly at home at his place of business or in the wet back-room of "Sally's" restaurant than in his own house. A woman is more at home in the shopping district and the fashionable club than in her nursery. And the child—God help it!—has *no* home but the public school!"

As Paul's words came back, she saw him standing up there before the very elect of the city, hurling anathemas that must have stung most ears, yet not hissed; applauded rather—applauded to the echo. And she had seen the strange flush of earnestness sweep over his young face at the sound—the tears leap to his eyes.

Again a sense of her own unworthiness, her moral and social littleness, as it must look to Paul's larger vision, humbled her spirit. She had a curious feeling, as if she were kneeling in church before a "holy of holies," that sanctuary of a *good* as well as a great man's soul.

On the instant, as if in commentary on her thought, a phenomenon occurred that had already obtruded itself once or twice and always disturbingly.

In the air before her a cluster of Easter lilies seemed to hold itself a second close to her lips, then a hand reached from the ether and snatched it away. As before, when the symbol had presented itself, she experienced a chill, as if a cold breeze were blowing from behind her through a door suddenly opened.

This time the chill was deeper and took sterner, more terrifying hold of her being. Before, the hand had been impersonal, unrecognizable, of beautiful shape and whiteness, distinctly an ethereal hand, but today it had a curious familiarity, like a hand she had some time touched and clasped.

As it vanished, holding the lilies, or, rather, dissolved into a ray of golden dust drifting from a window, a ring on its third finger, dissolving last, glittered an instant alone, a gleaming point of light in the air, till the pair of carved dragons on its seal had burned into her vision—*Dennis's ring!*

She sprang from her seat, startled, and ran to the dressing-room, her one thought to get the comfort and security of Paul's tangible presence between her and that hand stretched out to snatch, once more, happiness from her.

She was shaken and incoherent, all the exquisite apple-blossom pink frozen out of her face. Paul saw her at once, and a quick alarm leaped into his eyes, but he held his attitude of reposeful meditation a full minute before he rose and came over to her.

"Why, Dénise," he said. "Dearest, what has happened? You look as if you had seen a ghost."

The little wraith of a smile glimmered over her lips, her wide frightened eyes clinging to his.

"Perhaps I have," she said slowly. "Paul, I really think that I have. It was the lilies again—you remember I told you how they came in the air before me and a hand took them away? They came again just now out there, only—oh, Paul, it wasn't

just a hand that snatched them away—it was Dennis's hand. I saw his ring—the gold signet that I bought him, with the dragons carved on it."

Paul, too, had gone a trifle pale, but he spoke soothingly, in a tone of reassurance.

"You imagined it, dearest. You saw, or thought you saw, a hand take the lilies, and your knowledge of Dennis's opposition to our marriage transformed it into Dennis's hand. Then, of course, your imagination went further and supplied the ring. It is just hallucination.

"You were thinking about our wedding, which naturally brought your brother to mind. It doesn't mean anything else—what *could* it mean? Don't be foolish, dear! Nobody but kiddies and spiritists believe in ghosts. You're neither a child nor a spiritist, are you?"

DENISE sat down in the chair he had placed for her, but she was still trembling. The heavy perfume from a jar of lilacs on the window-sill recalled the fragrance of the lilies. She felt giddy and suddenly sick. She passed a hand uncertainly across her eyes.

"I don't know!" she said sombrely. "I've always seen things—ever since I was a child. I was five years old when my big black and white cat, William, disappeared. We hunted everywhere for him. Then, one day, I saw him, just as plainly as I saw the lilies, go down the garden walk and through the hedge into the middle of the next field to a clump of bushes and then I didn't see him any more.

"I called Denny and we ran after him to the bushes, and there he was, lying on the side, with his poor head thrown back. He was terribly torn, as if dogs had killed him. Dad said he must have been dead a week."

Paul came over to her chair and stood beside it, his coat-sleeve brushing her shoulder. The mere touch of his garment always thrilled her. Now, under it, she felt her fear subside a little. Dennis's hand, so clear-cut an instant before in her vision, grew vague and indeterminate, like a hand seen in a dream. She began to be a bit uncertain whether she had really seen a ring.

And when Paul stooped suddenly and, with that exquisite reverence which always characterized his every motion in her presence, touched his lips to her hair, the ring faded out of the picture. No doubt Paul was right. She might have imagined the whole thing after all.

"I know! I remember!" he said patiently. "Poor William! You showed me his grave, didn't you, with the red and white Sweet Williams planted over it. But your seeing the cat where you afterward found him was just coincidence. He probably went often that way, so, when you missed him, you naturally thought of something happening to him where he was used to go.

"Most so-called 'apparitions' can be disposed of in some such way. There is always a natural explanation for what seems supernatural when it is subjected to the acid test of reason.

"But I wish, dear, you would fight against these hallucinations — they are gruesome. You're far too healthy-minded and altogether charming in every other way to get mixed up with spiritism. I don't want to think of you as a medium lady—why, you're not in their class at all!"

Dénise smiled again, dimplingly, and the apple-bud pink blossomed once more in her cheeks.

"Thanks! But I don't know if I'm not—though you evidently mean it for a compliment. I never saw a

real medium. What is one like, Paul?"

"Not like you!" he said vehemently, his eyes meanwhile adoring her. "Short and fat, with double chin and bold eyes, stuffy rooms and crystal globes and all manner of fakery and trumpery.

"I heartily wish," he spoke impatiently, with a hint of personal grievance, "the city authorities would put the same ban on a medium's 'readings' that there happily is on fortune-telling. You don't want anything to do with that class," he reiterated. "I wouldn't want to see you mixed up with them."

DENISE laughed outright, to her lover's apparent relief, and sunshine chased the last wavering shadow from her face.

"I'm in for a lecture. Don't you pity me, Edith?" she appealed to a spring vision in apple-green taffeta that appeared suddenly in the doorway.

"I'm inclined to envy you!" the vision found melodious voice and a dazzling smile that included Paul. She carried in one green suéde hand a big bunch of violets which she shook playfully at Dénise.

"My lecturer sent me up these! If you run across him out there"—she nodded behind her toward the auditorium—"just tell him that, if I'm not wearing them for his sake, I'm carrying them—for the present! I *may* throw them at your feet, Mr. Leland, if you take us all off ours as you did a week ago. You were magnificent! The whole city is *proud* of you."

Paul laughingly disclaimed, but Dénise noted a quick flash of pleasure in his eyes.

"I'm never quite sure what I'll do. Sometimes I assure you I'm a bore. At Utica a week ago I left the hall on the heels of a party of young girls who recorded that I was dumb! I didn't get any violets *that* night."

"But full measure, pressed down and running over, of applause," Edith Wayne countered. "I happened to be in Utica myself. And I nearly *burst* with a personal pride in my city's first citizen."

"I assure you I feel myself the last," Paul said, with a sigh, and his handsome boyish face took on a pensiveness that vastly became it. "After thundering invectives at my fellows, I sometimes stop short and ask myself, 'Who am *I* to judge others?' And yet, Mrs. Wayne, if someone had not courage to speak out now and then, this old world of ours would go hurtling to destruction——"

"—and hell-fire!" Mrs. Wayne daringly interploated, with a laugh and shrug.

"—even faster than it is going," the young social worker finished, his grave face somewhat lightened by the reflection of her smile.

Mrs. Wayne became serious, too.

"You are doing wonderful work. Don't question it! I was talking with the mayor yesterday. 'Oh, I confess I'm hard hit myself now, and then,' he said, 'but for all that I wish our reformer God-speed! He's doing worlds of good in high places and low.'"

Again that quick flush mantled the young lecturer's face, but, as Dénise had often noticed before, it was characteristic of his spiritual modesty that he seemed to wince from the praise. He turned his back on it now and glanced through the door.

"It is filling up fast," he said. "I think, Dénise, you had better be looking for a seat."

As if to dismiss her, he walked with her to the door, but, as Dénise went through it, he laid a hand on her arm.

"All the same," he repeated, with

a hardening of his golden voice, curiously suggestive of the baser metal, "I don't wish you mixed up with women of that sort."

"With medium ladies or ladies ready to throw flowers under your feet? By-by, Paul! I'll carry you up to dinner."

SHE found a chair in the auditorium some five or six rows from the front. There were strangers on either hand, which made the location even more than ordinarily desirable. For Dénise, apart from the fact that she could listen to Paul better and appreciate him more fully at his worth, if no one was talking to her, today especially wanted an opportunity to think.

Uneasiness was stirring in her mind as she sat listening to the prelude the organist of St. John's church was playing on the mighty auditorium organ.

Paul didn't like "medium ladies." He didn't like Dénise's "hallucinations." Conversely, however, he apparently did like very blonde ladies in apple-green taffeta, who were ready to throw violets—and themselves—at his feet.

How quick he had been to send Dénise away after Edith Wayne came! Though, of course, common-sense interposed, Edith had to stay, because, as the Woman's Club president, she must, as a matter of form, preside on the platform and introduce the lecturer who was appearing under the club's auspices.

But Paul had seemed so eager! If he weren't so good—but, then, she caught up the thought sharply—he *was!* And again convicted herself of unworthiness, which recalled her vision.

Why had it come? Do the dead—for away from Paul the hallucination hypothesis lost the reasonableness it acquired in his presence—carry their earth-animosities with them into the world of spirit? Did Dennis still follow Paul with that old implacable though inexplicable hostility?

Dearly as she had loved Denny, she had breathed easier since his passing, comforting her conscience, as her wedding-day approached, with the belief that now Denny, his eyes opened to Paul's goodness, himself desired the very union that, living, he had opposed.

But the apparition upset all that she had wanted to believe, for while she had never doubted that the lilies symbolized the purity of her lover's soul, the fact that it was Denny's hand that took them away bore ominous significance.

It seemed to bring her brother again between her and her lover—still hostile, implacable, following Paul with a menace she could not understand. Why was it? she asked herself anxiously, for Denny must know Paul now as Paul was.

She lifted her eyes to the earnest, aspiring face on the rostrum. Uncommonly beautiful, in its clarity of feature and coloring, for a man's, it possessed more than beauty; it aspired, like his upward glance, after the highest. Looking at Paul, it was easier to believe Denny's spirit still bound in the trammels of earthly error than to believe Paul other than she did believe him.

Her mind thus absorbed, she hardly noticed that the prelude and Mrs. Wayne's few graceful words of introduction were both over and that Paul had risen to begin his lecture.

If she were a medium lady really, she would doubtless know just what the vision meant. It being incredible to her that Paul was what Denny thought him, it was equally incredible that Denny, his eyes opened now, could be trying to harm him.

The vision must mean something else—perhaps Paul's death or per-

haps—her heart almost stopped beating—some woman who was ready to throw flowers before him, some woman who was young and beautiful and had no "gruesome hallucinations" who was taking him from her.

And Denny, dear Denny, was trying to get through and warn her, just as, in life, he had always protected her. This was the more plausible explanation, for Denny had been an honorable enemy. He had not liked Paul, but he had opposed him openly, and fearlessly.

"I don't like the man," he had said bluntly. "But I don't know why I don't like him. No, I've not the ghost of anything on him. So far as I *know*, he's all that you think he is, Dénise, but, mark the words— so *far as I know!*"

DENISE marked the words now, "so far as Denny knew!" and just as she marked them, with unrest stirring afresh in her heart, she saw Denny quite plainly, dressed as the last time he went out, in the gray tweed morning suit he affected.

He was standing a pace or two behind Paul to one side and he had something over one arm—she could not see what distinctly, for Paul's evening-coat was in the way. Denny was pale, but his eyes burned under their rather heavy brows with singular vitality.

His grave, sad face was full of import. He seemed to be looking at Dénise over the heads of the people, warning and pity alike in his eyes. His lips moved, but, if words came from them, they were lost in the golden periods of Paul's oratory. Carried on the wave of his own eloquence, the lecturer was approaching his climax.

"What," he asked, "is the glittering garb of the social and political hypocrite that it should blind the world's eye? What the cloth-of-gold garment by which the millionaire bankrupt hides his moral poverty from the gaze of the street. Though it may seem to you today strange speech from the lips of a public man, I pray the time may soon come when it will not seem strange or bombastic, but a manly and honorable declaration, for every citizen to say of himself, as simply and frankly as I say now, in public as in private life, I thank God that I wear upon my shoulders the white robe of innocence!"

He paused and looked up, with that pure aspiring gaze that always made Dénise humiliatingly conscious of her own spiritual lack.

But as he stood an instant in the pose, Denny stepped close and, unfolding what he carried on his arm, flung it over Paul's shoulders—a crimson robe. Wrapping it across Paul's breast, completely enveloping him, Denny turned again on his sister that significant look of mingled warning and pity.

Dénise moved to cry out, but, as in a nightmare, her voice was stricken dumb. She looked apprehensively around. It seemed to her that everyone in the auditorium must see what she saw—must start with her to cry out.

But all faces were turned to the rostrum with admiration and respect. And when she looked back at Paul, he stood again in his black evening clothes, his face, rapt with the light of inspiration, still uplifted.

While he stood thus transfigured, as it were, by his own illuminated spirit, Denny came again out of the shadow, and again laid the crimson robe over Paul's shoulders, turning once more on Dénise those warning, pitying eyes.

This time Dénise did cry out, but the sound was lost in the thunder of the organ. She groped rather than saw her way out of the auditorium.

It had been her habit to wait outside in her car for Paul and carry him to the house for dinner, but as the chauffeur opened the car door for her, she ordered:

"Home, Reed!" with a woman's instinct to be alone with her heart.

PAUL, apparently offended by the omission, did not come up for dinner. Dénise was both sorry and glad that he did not—sorry because that tender, loving heart of hers, reacting, cried out for him in all faith and loyalty; glad because his absence gave her time to submit vision or hallucination to that "acid test of reason" before seeing Paul again.

As it happened, however, there was a guest at table, a Harvard classmate of Dénise's father, in town for a few days to lecture before the Chamber of Commerce on "The Psychology of Success." He was a keen and scholarly man, highly esteemed in his profession, but Dénise had always rather taken him for granted as a friend of the family.

Today he became invested in her eyes with new importance, for, the table talk drifting to the Society of Scientist's late test of mediums, he said, with impressiveness:

"I am far from being satisfied that the committee's decision has 'laid' the psychic ghost. Judging from my own experience in testing mediums, I am compelled to admit—as every impartial investigator must admit—that psychic phenomena, objective and subjective, do really occur.

"That such are produced by spirits of the dead, I am not prepared to affirm. But, strictly *sub rosa*, you understand—in the eyes of the world such an admission from a man of my standing would rate him as fool or dupe—I confess that, personally, I would find such explanation of the phenomena, where it occurs, less of a strain on reason than the elaborately built-up counter-theories of telepathy and subconscious mind, which quickly involve one in such a maze of contradictions and maddening subtleties that he may well imagine himself in Bedlam.

"Still, on the other hand, I am compelled to admit that, in the vast majority of subjective phenomena investigated, telepathy would certainly cover the ground. A good medium can always dig down deep—you'll find most of them using the phrase, too!—in the subconscious mind of her sitter and find what the sitter has himself forgotten or never consciously known; or the mind of some other sitter, acquainted with the person the psychic happens to be reading for, will telegraph, so to speak, the information to her.

"Of course," the professor emphasized with tapping forefinger on the tablecloth, "even here a spirit *might* be the communicant, but more evidently and more certainly it is the sitter himself and his friends. It's a moot question, though.

"In the objective phenomena, however, it's a different matter. Telepathy and subconscious mind will *not* cover the ground. There's the rub! Doctor Hudson suggests that the mind of a sensitive or medium may so project itself into space as actually to create a manifestation with all the attributes of human life—sense, sight, auditive and vocal powers—a perceptible, tangible being.

"But again, personally, I say, I find such a theory less plausible, rationalistically speaking, than that a sensitive's body gives off, in trance condition, a mysterious vital plasm from which a spirit may mold his own form and features temporarily.

"But, as I just said, it's a moot question"—the professor's brows uplifted in deep transverse furrows and his eyes peered anxiously ahead of him as if seeking a loophole in that

blank wall of silence that, since the days of the Nazarene, has stood between the worlds—"yet is it not the most vitally important question in the world today?"

WHILE the psychologist talked, a sudden purpose was gathering in Dénise's mind—or was it Denny's mind guiding the thought in hers, turning it as and whither he wished? When Doctor Barnstead paused, Dénise put her question. Was there a medium in town that Doctor Barnstead believed genuine—that is, of course, as mediums go?

Doctor Barnstead knew one—a Madame Tyne. He believed he had her address. While he was searching a notebook for it, Dénise's father chronicled at length the finding of William.

"So you see, Thorn," he ended, "this young lady herself is a bit of a medium or used to be—eh, Dénise? And her twin brother, Dennis, was more so. Up to the day of his death, his 'impressions,' as spiritists call them, were remarkably strong. He would never go against them. This was peculiarly the case in regard to persons for whom he felt instinctive dislike. He never reversed his judgment."

"Indeed? And does he still receive such impressions?" the psychologist asked absently, running over his notebook.

"Poor boy!" the father sighed deeply. "He was killed under his car the day before Christmas, Thorn."

"Yes!" Dénise answered with startling distinctness.

The doctor looked up from his notebook.

"Ah, yes, here it is—22 Cedar Place—Georgi-anna"—he made two words of the name—"Tyne, 'apparently genuine, but clairvoyant and clairaudient only.'" He turned back to his host. "Your son should try to develop," he suggested. "There is need of strong intellectual mediums to get through the wall—if it *can* be got through!"

"Dennis has *got* through," Dénise said, but her father had cut in again and was explaining afresh to the doctor that Denny was dead.

The talk veered to his fatal accident and, in Doctor Barnstead's compassionate interest, things psychic dropped out of sight. Afterward Dénise was glad—so glad, that her last remark had been passed over.

It was not until the edge of the spring evening that she found herself free to look up Madame. With an impulse to secrecy, again, she felt, an impression from Denny, she did not take the Rockland, but a trolley to Calla street and walked the short distance to Cedar Place.

The medium lived in a rather dingy-looking apartment-house on the third floor. There was a self-service elevator, but Dénise preferred the stairs, to give herself time to prepare for the interview.

Even so, she stood several minutes outside Madame's door, dreading to hear from the medium's lips the fear that was gathering over her own heart. Dénise's subconscious mind might have conjured up the lilies, she was ready to admit, but the crimson robe — never! What had Denny meant?

Madame Tyne herself answered the bell when Dénise mustered courage to ring it. Madame discounted, on first glimpse, Paul's sweeping generalization of mediums. Short and inclined to embonpoint, certainly, yet with no apparent paraphernalia of fakery about her.

She wore a blue silk dress protected by a crisp bungalow apron, as suggestive of good-housewifery as the aroma of a particularly appetizing roast from the kitchen.

Her pleasant brown eyes, too, sug-

gested the home-maker. As they searched Dénise's, a curious acuteness came into them—a wide, far gaze of illimitable knowledge that seemed to make them all at once the eyes of a stranger.

GOING to the mantel, she lighted four candles in short wrought-iron candlesticks. Then she sat down in a big ebonized rocker in front of Dénise and began to speak slowly, with little halting pauses between the words.

"My dear," she said, "would you know a tall fair man with blonde curly hair and blue eyes and, I'd say, a very beautiful face like pictures of our Lord, when He was a young man?"

It was Paul's very description, and it was on the tip of Dénise's tongue to admit it, but the next instant she was glad that she had not done so, for the medium went on without awaiting a reply:

"I see two square gray stone towers. He, the young man, has something to do in that building. Is it a church? No! Please give it to me a little plainer! Lady, they show me a platform now, and the young man standing on it. He seems to be talking to a lot of people, for I see now that it's a very big building and crowded to the doors.

"I don't think he's a political speaker—but he has something to do with politics, too, but I get a more spiritual condition. Yet he's not a minister, either. However, that doesn't matter.

"What matters is that he's planning something that affects you and somebody else more than you—oh, yes, lady!"—the medium's face changed and her voice went deep, ringing unpleasantly—"much more than you! But he won't carry it through. Do you understand, lady?"

"No!" Dénise's voice was as dry as the lips it came through. She moistened the lips with her tongue.

The medium appeared to speak to herself, or, uncannily, to another.

"H'm! She doesn't understand. Then I'll have to dig deeper!" Dénise recalled Doctor Barnstead's—"and you'll find most mediums using that phrase, too"—and stiffened defensively, trying to make her mind blank against that deep-fathoming mind of Madame's.

Of course, the medium had got all this so far out of her, Dénise. That vague "somebody else" must be her own fear visualized. No doubt, should Madame go on to describe the "somebody," she would be fair, like Mrs. Wayne, with wide worshipful eyes and blonde hair.

Dénise determined Madame should get nothing more. She fixed her gaze resolutely on the wall-paper above the medium's head and strove to make her own mind as dim, dun and seemingly patternless. Now, let Madame try what she could get!

Madame went on, undisturbed.

"Now, they show me a church tower and a bell in it. He, the tall, fair man, thinks the bell is going to ring for him and—you don't mind my saying it, do you, lady?—for you, too. But—it won't ring! There's a hand on the clapper.

"It's a hand that I think you know, for the gentleman the hand belongs to tells me so." Dénise's frightened eyes fell from the wall-paper to Madame's and clung there in the fascination of fear. Denny's hand!

There again, in spite of her determination, was the thought in plain mental sight for Madame to grasp at. Madame grasped instantly.

"Your brother's hand. *Now* do you understand?"

"I understand what you say," Dénise answered rather coldly.

For it seemed perfectly clear that Madame was merely giving back

what she got of Dénise's own mind. Madame rose suddenly and blew out the candles, then sat down again and took the girl's hands in her large, warm palms.

"I'm not going to give you a reading," she said, with decision, "first, because you can get for yourself as well as I can get for you; second, because you don't want to believe what I tell you any more"—she smiled suddenly—"than you want to believe what you get yourself.

"I'll say just this much more, though—if you want to know what Den—Den—it's a funny name, I can't quite get it—is it *Dennis?*—meant, go to Grove street, No. 80"—here Madame fell into confusion like any ordinary human being struggling to recall something half-forgotten—"no, that wasn't the number—81. There's somebody there who knows about this man that interests you.

"But, lady"—the medium gave herself a slight shake; the impersonal illumination left her eyes; brown, pleasant, motherly again, they seemed to yearn over Dénise with a very real distress—"I *don't want you to go.* I want you to content yourself with what you know now—that your brother has got through to you with a warning. But if you *will go*—and he tells me that you will—ask for Mrs. Jones. That's just all I can give you today. Go to Grove street, No. 81—if you *must* go—and talk with Mrs. Jones."

The medium disengaged a hand from Dénise's and passed it over her eyes. Then she shook her head slightly again and smiled at the girl.

"Did I give you anything?" she asked, with too apparent ingenuousness.

"SOMETHING," Dénise had to answer, for, while it was obvious enough that the medium had fished Paul and Dennis out of Dénise's own mind, Grove street, with its mysterious number and its more mysterious residents, was not so easy to explain. Inexplicable, it seemed to stand for something menacing, like her own vision.

Madame yawned, like one just awakened from a refreshing sleep.

"You're very mediumistic, lady," she repeated. "You get a good deal for yourself, and you might get a good deal more, if you liked."

"Perhaps," Dénise admitted, "but Pau—someone," she corrected herself, flushing, "*wouldn't* like."

"No!' the medium's eyes widened and brightened again to that curiously impersonal look of illumination. "I know he wouldn't—naturally!"

There was menace, seemingly, for Paul in the fall of that last word. With an impulse to shield him, Dénise interposed quickly:

"Being a social reformer!" she defended.

Madame Tyne smiled slightly.

"Yes, being a reformer," she agreed, yet again, in the mere assent, sounded that undernote of menace, as if Madame Tyne herself knew something or—Dénise drew a quick breath of relief in her own explanation—was hostile to Paul because she had sensed, telepathically, his hostility to all her profession.

"I don't want you," Paul had said, "to get mixed up with mediums—you're not in their class at all."

A little guilty at being with a medium now, Dénise rose hastily and Madame, rising too, proferred her large, warm palm. Again, her pleasant brown eyes dwelt motherly on the girl's troubled face.

"Good-by," she said, with repeated pressure. "Don't forget! We're never alone in deep waters. Just when we think that we're drowning, we're close to the other bank. We're taken across somehow."

Dénise went downstairs with her mind in a whirl. As Doctor Barnstead had said, telepathy certainly covered the ground or, where it didn't, that deep underlying subconscious mind did—or didn't it? What about Grove street 81? And Mrs. Jones who *knew!* Though Mrs. Jones might be just a safe hazard—in a crowded tenement district a common name such as Jones would be reasonably certain.

Grove street was placed, in the corner drugstore directory, between Bond and Adams streets, on the other side of the city, so Dénise walked home for the car.

The street proved itself a byway in the heart of a slum. No. 81 looked a bit better class than its right and left neighbors. Its window curtains, at least, were snowy and its doorstep, at least, had been swept.

A child, around four years old, with the face of a baby angel, answered the decrepit bell. Yes, mamma lived here. Would the lady please come in?

Dénise pleased. The room, into which the door opened directly, was tiny but furnished with comfort and surprising taste. A desk-table under the curtained windows, which boasted overdraperies of cretonne, bore on it indubitable indications of literary, or at least scholarly bent. Books and papers, the latter closely written, were scattered over it. The title, "Speech to the Electors of Bristol," stood out in gold letters on the back of one of the books.

A young girl was sitting in a cretonne-cushioned bronze willow easy-chair, hushing a wailing baby against her breast. As she looked up inquiringly, Dénise met a pair of remarkable eyes—violet, gray, or rather, both hues, like a showery April day, with golden gleams filtering through.

The girl had the inevitable bobbed hair with an Egyptian curl over each cheek and she wore the inevitable banana silk stockings and tan pumps. But her housedress was more individual, a pretty home-made blue and white gingham, and the string of pearls on her beautiful girlish bosom, was, Dénise noted, a really good imitation, selected by a buyer who knew.

The girl did not rise, but an April-sweet, April-sunshiny smile made Dénise welcome.

"If you'll please find a chair!" Mrs. Jones said. "My baby is sick and so fretty, I can't put her down a minute."

Dénise sat down, with a sense of intrusion. Luckily, the subject of the sick baby promised to cover her utter lack of excuse for being there.

"Is she very sick? It *is* a little girl, isn't it?"

"Yes. And I'm afraid that she is. She was so bad yesterday that I had to send for the doctor and my husband, too."

"Oh! Your husband was at work!" It was a foolish thing to say, but it filled the gap.

"Yes"—the girl, too, seemed moved to fill a gap—"at the Civic Club. He's janitor," she explained.

AT once, to Dénise's vision, the plot cleared. She drew a quick breath of relief that, after all, didn't wholly relieve. The whole thing was a *reductio ad absurdum*—the medium having apparently coupled Mrs. Jones of Grove street and the president of the Civic club through the natural link of the club's janitor. It was to laugh—or wasn't it?

"Your husband must know Mr. Paul Leland, then—the president," Dénise said to the girl.

She was meaning to add that she was soon to marry him, but something held back the words. To her surprise Mrs. Jones's beautiful eyes narrowed and darkened.

"Yes. He knows him!"

And, at the words, again with that curious premonitory chill, Dénise felt Denny's presence. The medium was right, then. Mrs. Jones of Grove street knew something and that same thing Denny knew! Dénise felt a vague terror.

Yet what could the janitor of the Civic club possibly know against its president—unless Paul had been misusing club funds! But this idea, in connection with Paul, simple and austere in his living as the veriest early-century anchorite, was preposterous.

The girl was caressing the downy head of her baby with exquisite mother-touches, looking across it the while at her visitor, her innocent girl-eyes suddenly woman-wise.

"Perhaps you don't know Mr. Leland very well!" she seemed to muse. "It isn't for me to say anything, perhaps, because my husband is janitor of the club he's president of, but I'll tell you this, lady, if you're interested in him, my husband won't let me go to hear him speak, because he knows him as a man. You see, Mr. Leland lives at the club!"

"But your husband must be wrong!" Dénise protested, her loyalty flaring, her hurt pride in Paul and her love for him flushing her cheeks.

Mrs. Jones brooded, her wonderful eyes, like the spring dusk, purple-dark.

"I know how you feel. I went to a fortune-teller once. She lived in Cedar place—Madame Twine or something like that. She told me a lot about my husband—that he wasn't as good as I thought him. I didn't believe her then, of course—I wouldn't, any more than you believe *now*—but it upset me.

"It was all sort of mixed up, worded *queer*, but I knew what she meant. She said she'd 'dig deeper'—that was a funny way to put it, wasn't it?—if I wanted her to. But I didn't then. I was afraid of what she might say.

"Afterward, I thought I'd go back and ask her, but I never did, because, one day, I had a fuss with my husband over another—well, I guess I was jealous!" the girl laughed but blushed.

"I told him all the fortune-teller had said and he was very sore. He forbade me to go to her or any other fortune-teller again. He said they were all fakes and no clean-minded woman would believe a word they told her."

Dénise was unable to forbear a smile, for the janitor's crude but sweeping denunciation sounded like a weaker, which was to say, an illiterate edition of Paul. Perhaps, though, it was the other way around and the janitor, who had really a grievance, had imbued Paul with his prejudice. Men did talk like that among themselves—even club presidents with janitors—a good deal, Dénise reflected, as the mistress of a household talks with her cook.

The girl went on seriously: "Of course, I didn't believe her, any more than you believe my husband. But sometimes, when little things happen, little things maybe, that don't mean *anything*"—again the girl's eyes seemed to brood—"I find myself wondering—what if Madame was *right?*"

Dénise wondered, too, and once more became uneasily conscious of Denny, as if he were standing near her, though she couldn't see him.

THE girl became absorbed in her baby, which had again broken into fretful crying. She hushed it against her breast, covering its head and dimpled arms with passionate kisses. Dénise looked on, a curious thrill in her own breast. Suppose she held something of Paul like that, close to her breast, into her lips and had to wonder the while, *what if Madame*

was right? The thrill turned to pain—the very ecstasy, it seemed, of anguish.

"Mother's precious!" The girl strained the baby close, as if to stifle a fear. "Mother's precious Pauline!"

And then a strange thing seemed to happen—an incredible thing. With the warm throbbing pulse scarcely subsided in her heart, there came once more that strange indescribable chill, the cold breeze over her shoulder, a sense of wind blowing, too, against her forehead, and again, as in the auditorium, she saw Denny's hand. She was sure of it now, for not only the ring with the gold dragons on it was plainly manifest, but a little scar at the base of the forefinger where the boy Denny had hacked himself with a hatchet.

This time, however, the hand was not poised in air, but rested among the papers on the desk and, as she gazed at it, fascinated, it began to move among them or, rather, to turn them over, as if searching for something.

Then quickly—it all happened quickly, in the fraction of a minute—Denny's fingers lifted one of the closely-written sheets and slipped it along the desk-edge toward Dénise—over the desk-edge.

The paper fluttered to the floor. The young wife snatched at the little four-year-old, hovering between the table and Dénise chair, and slapped his hands smartly.

"Junior! Naughty boy! Mustn't touch Daddy's papers! Mother'll whip!" the girl spoke with nervous sharpness, then turned to Dénise in apology.

"My husband is so fussy about his writing! He never lets *me* touch it, even. He writes most of the time when he isn't at the club," she added, with apparent pride in the janitor's unusual avocation. "He says he is going to make a book of it some time."

But Dénise hardly heeded. As she stooped to pick up the paper, the handwriting struck her full in the eyes, and the words that stood out of the round, beautiful, unmistakable script were familiar, too, in spite of erasures and interpolations.

"—to say, as simply and frankly as I say now, in public as in private life, I thank God that I wear upon my shoulders the white robe of innocence."

DENISE'S face was the color of ashes, too, where, just a few minutes ago, the fires of youth and of love had burned ardently.

She groped rather than saw her way to the door, for all things had turned suddenly dark. The only bright spot in the room was the baby's face. As Dénise looked back at it from the door, it shone like a star through the gloom—the only hope in life for them all.

"I must go!" she found herself saying in a voice she didn't recognize. "Good-by! I hope your little girl will be better."

In the car she leaned her reeling head on her hands, but there was no earthly support for her stricken heart. Whether it was Denny's or the little boy's hand that had actually slid the paper over the desk-edge seemed all at once of no moment, for some way dimly, in her agony, she saw behind the agent-hand, whether spirit or human, through that inextricable and inexplicable tangle of medium and psychologist, of vision and fact, of Denny and little boy, the hand of God acting through all, moving His creatures in unsearchable ways and always with justice. Ah!—but was it always with *mercy?*

Like the balm of Gilead to her aching wound came back Madame's words:

"Don't forget! We are never alone in deep waters!"

Then strangely, if it were fact, marvelously, if it were fancy, Dénise felt a touch of ineffable gentleness on her shoulder—her arm. And she knew, before looking down, that it was being given her again to see Denny's hand resting there in caress.

"I thank you—God!" she murmured brokenly. Then, mercifully to her pent heart, savingly to her struggling reason, tears came.

The Bishop and the Phantom Monk

Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Winchester, when he was only a Canon, was all against the notion that there were ghosts; that is, until he saw one, as he himself tells in his "Memoirs."

He was a guest in a well-known family, and on the night of his arrival, coming down to dinner, he passed a monk going toward the library. The family were Roman Catholics so he assumed the monk was another guest. At dinner, not seeing the monk, he asked about him. His hostess turned pale and said he must have seen the family ghost, a former father confessor of an earlier period who had died suddenly.

What the Bishop thought of this proof to the contrary of his beliefs is not stated, but that night when he was sitting reading by himself in the library, the monk glided in and began to search about the bookcases. Then evidently not finding what he wanted, he left the room.

The Bishop's hair stood on end, but his blood was up. He retired to the library the next night, and as he had hoped, the monk again appeared. This time the Bishop asked the monk what he wanted. To his amazement the monk smiled and thanked him for breaking the barrier, for he had been waiting these long years for some living person to ask him that question.

He was looking for some papers on which, in life, he had set down some of the family secrets. He had been carried off by death before he had a chance to dispose of them and had been haunted by his failure.

Wilberforce offered to help in the search, and on top of the tall bookcases, where they had fallen onto a ledge out of sight, found a bundle of papers, which, on the monk's request, he burned in the fire.

This done, the monk took his leave with an expression of gratitude, and later inquiries disclosed that he had not been seen again in the house.

Watchman of the Wild

By HAROLD de POLO

UP in one of the higher limbs of a gnarled old spruce, jutting out over the shore of Big Basin Lake, a great horned owl was crouched in hiding. Beside him, taut-nerved and awed, yet vastly pleased, a young bird barely out of the fledgling class gripped his talons into the bark and did his mightiest to emulate his father.

It was the first lesson in actual hunting, and innate instinct told the youngster that silence and lack of movement and alertness of ear were the primary requisites in this business of getting food. It seemed, too, as if he might prove an apt disciple —if only he could still the rapid and excited beating of his little heart.

He found it hammering harder than ever, suddenly, for he saw his mentor give an infinitesimal turn to his head. He did likewise, gazing down at the still water, further up the bank, where the harsh croak of a bullfrog came from a patch of water-lilies. It was this sound, he now realized, for which they had been waiting.

He peered down through the mist that hung over the lake on this murky spring night, and presently his eye detected the yellowish-white and expanded throat of the unharmonious singer. It was difficult for him, at first, to be sure of it. So many of those flowers, closed for the dark hours, looked like——

But the youngster had no time to finish his thoughts. His teacher, almost without ruffling his feathers, darted off for the kill. The big bird traveled, for all his apparently clumsy bulk, with the speed of a powerfully shot arrow. His great pinions, with the strength of steel in them, made scarcely more noise than a gentle summer breeze playing softly along the highest treetops.

Almost before the wide-eyed watcher was aware of it, the winged hunter had swooped into that bed of lilies, struck like lightning, and instantly risen with the inert body of a pound-and-a-half frog dangling from his claws. In another moment he was back in the old spruce.

He partook of his prey slowly, as if each morsel of it were a banquet in itself. Usually, however, he would have torn this tidbit apart with avid haste, devouring it in two or three gulps—but this was an occasion when the filling of an ever-hungry maw was not the main issue.

The chief thing, now, was to instill in his offspring a further desire for food—to whet his appetite to the point of voraciousness—and thereby render him more anxious and more confident for his first kill. He saw that he was succeeding.

The blinking of those smaller eyes, the unconscious tensing of the talons, told him that. He saw, too, that the obedience he had rigidly demanded

was being followed, for although his pupil was ravenously hungry, as was easily seen, he made not the slightest effort of reaching over toward the prize.

As he swallowed the last of the frog, the phenomenally acute hearing of the owl told him that a mole or wood-mouse was down on the ground somewhere in the rear. Making a faint hissing sound that informed the youngster he was to copy his example, the veteran bird turned noiselessly on his perch.

It did not take him, after that, a matter of a scant two seconds or so to catch sight of the animal he had already marked as prey for his offspring. A small mole, it happened to be, industriously burrowing among the leaves in search of insects around the base of a huge boulder.

With a light fleck of his beak, this time, the great horned owl gave the command to his son that the moment for his début into the world, so to speak, had arrived. He saw, with satisfaction, that the youngster had grown calmer as action approached.

A slight tremor went through the body of the little fellow—but then, gathering in his muscles, he sailed on downward toward that unsuspecting furred thing with a swift and silent grace that was a joy for the big bird to behold.

Tragedy, though, is ceaselessly stalking in the wild—ceaselessly stalking among the feathered and the furred and the finned.

The comparatively insignificant mole, down there looking for provender, was not the only one, along this strip of shore, who was woefully ignorant of lurking peril.

As the young owl hovered a mere foot or two above his prospective victim, his aim perfect and his talons ready, a lithe and tawny form roared out from the further side of the big rock and slashed out viciously with a deadly paw.

Simultaneously, a weird scream of rage came from the great winged creature in the spruce as he valiantly hurled himself into the fray. But he was too late—too late by that fraction of a second that so frequently means the difference between life and doom amongst the folk of the open spaces.

Before he could distract the attention of the panther, the cat had already felled the young bird and was snarling menacingly up at the older one—while the little mole scampered away unheeded.

So began the feud of the east shore of Big Basin Lake—the feud that was to cause such worry and stress and fear.

THE great bird, mightiest killer of the air, did no more hunting that night. Instead, he slowly made his way, oblivious to any and all quarry that he chanced to pass, to the ancient hulk of the monstrous oak that still stood the ravages of years and weather.

Proudly, it reared itself up through the beeches and black ash that grew so prolifically on this slope of Old Hedgehog. Here, to the nest in the partly hollow tree that he had used for many seasons, the owl retired to be alone with his sorrow.

It had been a bitter year for the wily and battle-scarred campaigner—the bitterest year, perhaps, that he had ever known. On top of a hard winter—a winter of heavy snows and intense cold—he and his mate had brought forth only a single fledgling.

The crows, rapacious destroyers of eggs, had managed to enter the home and almost completely devastate it during the absence of the owls. The big birds, therefore, had used double the ordinary care in looking after the

lone offspring that had been left them.

It had seemed, for a time, as if he would prove to be a phenomenally clever pupil—but then, fresh disaster had come to the family. The mother, one morning, had failed to return, and the entire burden of attending to the youngster had been placed upon the father.

He did not know—he never could learn—how it was that his mate had met her doom. The visit of death, of course, is always expected among the wild folks, but this is not to say that it is not dreaded. He did his best to discover how it had happened, but not the slightest clue had been given him.

A weasel, a snake, a wildcat, a man-creature with one of those glinting black sticks that boomed forth red murder at a distance—who could tell? She was gone, that was all, and he had set himeslf grimly to the task of educating the son who was all that remained to him.

For they do that—the folk of the open spaces—do it bravely and utterly and against any desperate odds. Desertion, indeed, is a thing that is scarcely known.

Philosopher that he was, the great horned owl of Old Hedgehog, had allowed his grief to somewhat soften as he had daily witnessed the rapid strides toward self-sustenance that his offspring had exhibited. Tonight—only a pitiful hour or more ago—he had been vastly proud of the behavior of his youngster.

From his obedience, his restraint, his coolness in action, he had believed that the other would mature fully two or three weeks before the usual period. This, in the woods, means much. It means that the chances for life—for fighting the constant battle for food—are increased at least a third more. And then to have had that panther——

AS he thought of it, the sagacious old bird was still stunned, still unable to clearly comprehend. It was madness—madness, that was it—on the part of the feline.

There are various laws among the free kindred—laws that are unwritten, and tacitly understood, and very rarely violated. One of them, possibly the most vital of them all, is that one must not transgress, for hunting purposes, upon the territory of another.

The eastern slope of Old Hedgehog, taking in the shore of Big Basin Lake along the swamp lands, had always been considered the property of the great horned owl of the ancient oak.

The mink, the foxes, the bear—even certain members of the weasel ilk, most daring of all assassins—had understood this and rigidly adhered to it. So, until tonight, had the giant cat who dwelt up in a crevice along the ledge of rock close to the summit of the mountain.

Insanity—sheer insanity.

It must be paid for, though—that much was positive. Too often, of late, had this gluttonous cat who had come to the region two seasons before been encroaching upon the hunting fields of others. The owl, who made it his business to keep as strict a watch as possible of all that went on, had noticed various instances of this unethical marauding.

He called to mind the occasion when the feline had deliberately invaded the strip of brook that from time immemorial had been the fishing ground of the otter family. He remembered, too, when the brazen thief had visited the runway used solely by the wily red fox who was the king of his kind. Furthermore, he himself had seen the panther deliberately descend the other slope of Old Hedgehog and roam about the section that was owned by a lynx

pair, staying there for two days and nights.

They had been so incensed—these other cats—that they had nearly forgotten themselves to the extent of attacking him, but reason had pulled them back at the last moment. Two lynx, no matter how courageous, are no match whatsoever for a full-grown and healthy panther. But they still remembered, the owl knew; yes, they still remembered.

Never until now, however, had the cat annoyed the winged monarch of the air; he had, as a matter of fact, kept carefully away from him. Nevertheless, the bird realized that it had been with extreme difficulty that the panther had held himself in check.

Wanton killer that he was, envious of all creatures he suspected of procuring more food than himself, he had at last felt compelled to break the truce. What is more, he had undoubtedly done it after careful planning.

Aware that the owl had hunted frogs along that particular lake bank, he had probably secreted himself behind that boulder and waited for just such a chance.

But he would pay for it, would the cat. He would pay, to be perfectly candid, quite as much for violating the law of rightful territory as he would pay for snuffing out the life of the young fledgling. The love of their own flesh and blood is strong in the wild; but the desire to avenge a property wrong, it might be said, is equally as urgent. Food, after all, is the question that is ever present—cruelly so—with the denizens of the air and the water and the land.

THE owl of Old Hedgehog, naturally, knew that he would be entering upon a lengthy and grueling struggle when he decided to pit himself against the panther. With his comparatively scant poundage and size, it seemed as if the battle might be almost ludicrous.

Nevertheless, he came of a breed that has a keener vision, a more acute sense of hearing, than any of the creatures of the woods. He did not lack, either, for courage, and this same valiancy, this willingness to attack stupendous odds, has frequently caused his kind to be dubbed the tigers of the skies.

In fact, with his fiercely-blazing eyes of black and yellow, his fluffy white throat and cat-like ears, he somewhat resembled the big cats of the Bengal jungle. Added to this, he was possessed of a speed and accuracy of movement hardly any quadruped could equal. Again, he knew the virtue of patience.

He proved this latter assertion, the next night, when he sallied forth on his journey of vengeance. Knowing that the panther liked to hunt for tender rabbits, when the moon came up and bathed the earth with silver, he waited until the night became almost dazzlingly bright.

Then, after having wisely seen to his own hunger by capturing a fat-breasted partridge, he leisurely made his way to a runway between the evergreens, which he knew was traveled by the rabbit tribe while on their way to the verdant patch of meadow where the sweet clover grew so thickly. And here, secure in the belief that his enemy would eventually pass, he took up his vigil on the limb of a poplar.

He waited an hour—two hours—before he heard the soft padding of the cat coming toward the meadow from over in the direction of the lake. He could tell, instinctively, that the other was ravenously hungry, for the feet were lifted from the leaves quickly, nervously, as if the hunter was anxious to attain his goal.

He was certain of this, presently,

when he saw the feline crouch down beneath the branches of a low-hanging juniper, a tremor going through the tawny body as the owner of it fought to gain control of his nerves. But he did so, finally, and licked at his jowls in anticipation of the meal that he felt was now coming to him.

In a cold rage, as he gazed down at his foe, the owl realized that it had been the hard winter—the ghastly lack of food—that had made the panther commit the deed of the night before. He realized, too, that it would be this same hard winter that would allow him, in the tussle that lay ahead, to come off the victor.

Game was scarce for one and all, but it was immeasurably less scarce for specimens of his own ilk, having, as they did, a far greater range than the animals who must count solely upon creatures like themselves.

All he had to do, therefore, was to keep the cat from getting sustenance —and to see to it that he himself did not allow his stomach to go empty. The answer was simple.

HE fired the opening gun, shortly. While the nostrils and ears of his opponent were still ignorant of the fact, the acute hearing of the owl told him that a rabbit was coming down the trail, bounding playfully along in complete disregard of the danger that is always on hand in the forest.

For a full twenty seconds or more before the panther was aware of it, the bird listened to the approach of that leaping and harmless thing of the huge ears. At last, when the cat discovered the proximity of the victim, the bird had noiselessly descended to a lower branch and poised himself for his charge.

The rabbit came on and the panther tensed, and the owl could see the blood-lust in the eyes of the cat as he pulled back for the spring. Just as he made it—just as he launched his superb body out for the kill—the tiger of the air whirled down like a bullet, emitting a vicious hiss as he deftly brushed a wing before the eyes of his antagonist, while the rabbit went up in a bound that landed him a generous score of feet away in the safety of the brush.

With a shriek of fury that was well-nigh demoniacal, the foiled feline sprang up at that fluttering shape above him. He came—so he told himself—very close to slashing that feathered form with his claws.

He tried again—again and again—to reach that winged foe who for some reason seemed to stay just above him. He worked himself up into an insane rage, leaping and shrieking and spitting, and flailing out blindly with his paws.

Always, however, he fell short of the mark by no more than a matter of inches, until the cool-brained king of the air finally perched himself on top of a rotted chestnut stump some ten or twelve feet from the ground. Then, wisdom at last coming to him, the cat desisted from his frantic and futile efforts.

Calm and unruffled and portraying that remarkable dignity which he possessed when in repose, the feathered avenger of the air sat there on the stump and surveyed the cat below him with coldly inscrutable eyes.

After a moment, without a sound or a gesture to betray the anger that was burning within him, he casually took to the air and silently disappeared from view.

He knew that he had gained the first trick, for he was leaving behind him an adversary who was beginning to wonder precisely what was coming next.

THE fact that the cat tribe are nocturnal hunters, in practically nine

cases out of ten, fitted in extremely well with the plans of the owl. He himself, of course, also preferred the night.

This was not, however, because of the legend of his being unable to see in the day, but because—ironical to relate—this most feared and valiant killer of the air is so persecuted by crows and kingbirds that his life is made miserable during the sun hours.

The sheer numbers of these pestering enemies caused him to stay at home, usually, from dawn until dark, although the habit is so inculcated in all his breed that it is no longer a hardship. The night, too, is the most kindly time for those who must tear down their food.

Even so—and also knowing that the panther would not emerge from his cave so early—dusk had barely fallen on the following day when the grim avenger swept off up Old Hedgehog to the den of his opponent.

Here, choosing a vantage-point perhaps a hundred yards away in a heavy-foliaged cedar, he once more took up his watch. Again, too, he was forced to exhibit his patience, his stoical control of all his senses, for it was a generous three hours, at least, before the cat crept yawningly out.

And during that period, incidentally, the owl had seen two plump quail settle on a tree not fifty feet away. He would not, however, have moved for a dozen of them. The panther, above all, must not know of his presence.

The cat, as he stopped yawning and stretching, looked hastily around as if he expected that something, perhaps, was watching him and the carefully hidden bird realized beyond doubt that the episode of the previous night had not been forgotten.

In fact, as the feline slunk off through the forest, diagonally cutting his way downward toward Big Basin Lake, it was apparent that he was slightly nervous. After he had journeyed a half-mile or so, though, he gained more poise, and his arrogant bearing returned.

He was, it was plain to see, intent on reaching some particular spot, for he did not pause by the way on the chance of finding an odd mouthful or two. Bigger game, unquestionably, was what he was after, for lack of food on his last hunt had made him ravenous.

The shrewd tiger of the skies, keeping well in the rear and comfortably above the treetops, noiselessly pursued the animal against whom he felt such an implacable hatred. He decided, before long, that he was well aware of the spot for which the cat was making—that strip of sandy beach, over along the north shore, where the deer were prone to come on balmy spring nights.

There, in the moonlight, they liked to eat the succulent roots of the water-lilies and submerge themselves in the pleasingly cool lake, and prance around on the sand. They favored this place, too, because it afforded them a full view in every direction and rendered the approach of a dangerous enemy, unknown to them, a thing little likely to occur.

But the panther, the owl was certain, was making for this playground of the kindred of the cloven hoof. He was making for it, too, purely because it *was* deemed so safe by the deer tribe. Successful hunting in the wild takes much sane reasoning, and probably the crafty old cat argued that the bucks and does and fawns had so long visited the beach, without harm befalling them, that their suspicions had been lulled.

Scarcely any of the most vicious of the neighborhood night killers—the lynx and the bobcat—would even think of bothering to approach the

ground. Too long, indeed, had it been known as one of the few places where it was almost impossible to make a coup. It was time now, though, the trailing bird was sure his foe was thinking.

IT WAS shown that he was right, presently. He saw the panther, at last, settle himself down behind some brush that had been washed up on the shore, at the end of the beach that was furthest from the runway on which the deer came.

This, in itself, was a cunning stroke and, on top of it, luck was with him. As the cat stretched himself out, ready for the vigil, a wind ruffled the calm surface of the lake, stirred it into stronger waves, and then continued on a steady and brisk blow from the direction in which the deer would be arriving, did they conclude to come.

And so, calmly perched on one of the thick spruces that so abounded along the shores, the night emperor of the air—perhaps somewhat quizzically—waited for new actors to appear on the scene.

Briefly, it was not long before they did, as time is reckoned when the forest folk are stalking or lying in wait for prospective prey. After possibly a scant hour had gone by, the marvelously acute ears of the great horned owl detected the dainty stepping of a doe and her fawn—detected these footfalls a full quarter-mile away although they were made on a carpet of dead leaves and spruce needles that might have been judged sound-proof.

The bird saw, however, that the panther did *not* detect them—did not know of the approach, in fact, until the mother and fawn were close to the beach and their scent carried down to the marauder on the wind. Then the owl ruffled his feathers and eased up his position and got ready to enter at the propitious moment of the drama that was to be enacted below him.

The doe and her progeny stepped onto the strip of hard and white sand, and the cat hungrily licked at his lips and began to tense his body. The fawn, it seemed, was for some reason inclined to edge off down the shore in the direction of that heap of brush, and presumably the mother saw no peril in it.

The cat, then, gradually started to slither his way around the brush, but the grim watcher up there in the spruce had no idea of allowing the feline even the slightest chance whatsoever. The fawn was still too young to have a cool head or sufficient fleetness of foot to balance this other liability. In that first mad charge of the ravenous cat, perhaps, the youngster might grow panicky.

So, with one of his phenomenally bullet-like swoops, the powerful bird hurled himself at the head of the panther.

This time, when those steel-muscled pinions buffeted the head of the astounded feline, it was not with rage that he shrieked; it was, indeed, in plain and unadulterated fear. His cry was harrowing, and he hunched up his body and bounded blindly off—only to land ludicrously in the shallow water along the shore.

The light bath, at least, took away all thought of immediate revenge, for instead of essaying to reach the hovering owl, now, he growled low and sullenly and skulked off through the woods into which the doe and fawn had safely disappeared.

As on the night before, too, the owl did not follow, but leisurely flew off across the lake for the ancient oak on Old Hedgehog.

THE tiger of the skies, from then on, temporarily switched his tactics. He did not try, for a matter of a

week or more, to surprise the cat; instead, he showed himself from the start and made his enemy understand that he did not intend to allow him to do any hunting.

After the first two days of this, the panther had instantly retired to his cave when the owl would put in an appearance, and there he would stay until bright day. The bird, when this came, would depart for his own nest, utterly secure in the knowledge that his foe would find mighty lean pickings.

This was proven. The four-footed killer, at the end of the opening fortnight of the feud, had unquestionably lost a matter of twenty to twenty-five pounds. Flesh and fat shrink rapidly among the wild creatures, when they are mentally harassed on top of a belly aching from emptiness.

The owl, from his territory in the air, naturally found it a comparatively simple matter to procure food even while he was trailing his adversary. Unseen by the latter, he could silently swoop off and scoop up his food—a partridge, a chipmunk or squirrel, a young rabbit, a weasel, perhaps one of the smaller winged creatures—for the view he obtained from the air might be likened to the advantage of an aviator in his plane over a mere pedestrian.

The sagacious old warrior of the skies, indeed, had well been aware from the start that this feature of the combat, in itself, would give him a decided supremacy over his enemy. A full stomach, especially in the wild, is a mighty asset.

The great bird once more changed his method of warfare. He took, now, to practically living in the vicinity of that ledge of rock wherein lay the lair of the cat. Fortunately for him, he found a crumbling tree trunk—all that was left of a noble beech after the lightning had thoroughly blasted it—that was not more than a short couple of hundred feet away from the cave.

There he would sit, his face graven, and wearing that almost judicial expression of immense dignity that is characteristic of his kind. For the first few days he did nothing but that, and the feline, after peering out at his sentry, would cringe back into his den, a nerve-shattered wreck.

However, he fought for and regained his courage, and on the third night, boldly sallied forth. The owl did not follow him but, although the cat was out until after dawn, he failed to procure a meal. Somehow, in his hunting, he always had the queer sensation of *feeling* that his grim enemy was close by. Needless to mention, this is not the frame of mind to be in when searching for prey.

WHEN he returned, that night, and literally dragged his tired and weakened body into his retreat, the great horned owl was there to greet him. This time, however, the bird flew out of the cave, noiselessly and calmly, and again went to the blasted beech to take up his watch.

After this, for an hour or more, the hunger-crazed cat vainly fought to still the spasmodic twitching of his body. He was—to give him credit—a game specimen. Realizing that he was whipped, as he had finally concluded a few days ago, he nevertheless stuck by his guns and refused to give up his lair.

This, he had felt, was what the tiger of the air demanded—and now he decided to surrender. As soon as the stoical winged creature on the rotted stump disappeared inside of it, therefore, the tawny quadruped glided softly out into the open.

All that morning, with a caution that only a master of the art might bring into execution, the panther made the effort of his career to cov-

er his tracks. For once, he felt—he was *certain*, he repeatedly told himself—that fiendish winged pursuer was not following him. He was a beaten thing—a pathetic spectacle for a killer who had once been so mighty—as he crept through the forest.

Through underbrush he went, over gigantic fallen logs, down shallow stream beds, thinking of nothing but of hiding his trail from the enemy who now actually had him terrorized. Food was forgotten and, ironically, once he might have captured a rabbit and another time a lazy old woodchuck. He let them go.

He wanted only to get away—to get away from that maddening owl. Through it all, though, there still stuck to him the desire to find a new home somewhere close to the shores of Big Basin Lake. It was the last bit of his courage, the last ounce of pride, that he was instinctively trying to retain.

Finally, when the sun was high overhead, he reached the spot he had decided upon—a vacant black bear den, long abandoned, behind that strip of sandy beach on the north shore where the deer tribe liked to play. Here, in this cunningly hidden lair, he felt that the owl would not expect to find him, for the section was notorious for being the leanest hunting ground in the neighborhood.

This, for the moment, did not trouble him. In his dazed and throbbing brain, just now there was one thought only and this was that he wanted to get away from the yellow-and-black orbs of that uncanny watchman of the night and close his own eyes in a long, long sleep.

And so, exhausted almost to the point of collapse, the panther crept into the old bear cave and sank into instant and heavy slumber.

CONSIDERING his need of rest, the sleep of the panther was of short duration. It seemed to him as if he had barely closed his eyes before he heard the swish of those dreaded wings. Leaping to his feet with a wailing shriek of frenzied fear, he looked out into the dusk to see the tiger of the air coolly poised just above the entrance to the den.

He went wild, then—went actually insane, it seemed, for a moment or two. Bellowing his fright, he whirled around the cave like a dancing dervish, tearing at the walls and at the ground as if he would pull the earth down about him and so shut off forever the sight of that grim foe. Finding, soon, that he could not do this, he bounded out into the open and went blindly off toward the west.

The great horned owl, then, showed his complete and well-nigh miraculous grasp of the situation. As cool and as dexterous as if he were doing no more than making some insignificant kill for a fancied tidbit, he headed off the crazed cat.

It took him some time, at first, to drive the faintest semblance of reason into the distorted brain of the other, yet, after a dozen or more attempts, he triumphed. The panther, at last, must have realized that this monarch of the skies was merely insisting that the direction of his flight be changed.

Turning, therefore, he immediately made off for the east, feverishly hoping that those maddening wings would cease from fluttering so dangerously close to his eyes—to the eyes which, if injured to the point of blindness for even a mere day, would mean doom to him.

The wings did retreat—temporarily.

Never had the taste of hot blood or red meat been as wonderful to him, the thought flashed through his whirling brain, as was this joyous sense of relief. His exhaustion fell from him, his hunger left him, and a

new strength and stamina were born in him.

At a speed that was truly remarkable for one in his weakened condition, he fled along the shore where he had pulled down the young owl. Always, above him, he knew that disaster followed did he make a wrong move.

Instinctively, at a swish of those pinions, he turned up the old trail he had so often traversed—the trail that led to his den. But, just as he began the ascent, something pricked him directly behind the right eye—something which he knew was the vicious beak of the avenging owl.

A scream of crazed fear was literally torn from him, and he lowered his head and ploughed onward ever up and up, at a pace that was really a marvelous thing to behold. Only the terrible fear of a terrible death, perhaps, could have charged his emaciated body with this dynamic energy. Always, too, he tried to guard his eyes.

He approached, presently, the familiar fissure in the ledge of rock, but as he hesitated for the merest fraction of a second, that mottled, winged form swooped downward and the tip of a feather brushed roughly across an eyelid. Another shriek came from him, and again he lurched forward—lurched forward and upward in a fierce rush that was a noble thing to see.

It took him, did this last spurt, clear on to the bleak and rock-strewn summit of Old Hedgehog. Then, still further dropping his head, he started on a mad and pellmell descent of the steep and lengthy slope of the mountain.

Somewhere down there, perhaps, he might find safety from those torturing pinions. The hope of this, in fact, suddenly became stronger than ever; for, as he stumbled over a root in his frenzied haste, he happened to glance backward as he got to his feet and saw that the great bird was gravenly sitting on the tallest peak of rock!

Was he free at last?

THE avenging tiger of the skies, pausing for a moment to fully contemplate his next move, suddenly ruffled the feathers about his stocky neck and unconsciously allowed a hiss of anticipation to escape him. It was the first time during the long feud that he had unwilfully displayed anger. Still, he could not rightly be blamed for that, for had he not seen, down there close to a half-mile below him, a movement on the mountain slope that utterly answered his problem?

Leaving his perch, the owl sailed gracefully down to the scrambling cat, deftly fanning a wing close to his right eye and, like a well-trained circus specimen, one might say, the feline veered over to the left.

The bird, after this, behaved more cautiously than ever he had during the long and nerve-wearing struggle. To an almost exaggerated degree, he was cautious not to come within any chance reach of tearing fangs or ripping claws.

Purely with the fluttering of his wings just above or to either side of the head of his foe, he drove the other toward that cave down below them—toward that cave into which he had seen the lynx pair enter when he had paused on the summit—the lynx pair that did not forget.

Crazed as he was—crazed past all sense of sober reasoning—the cat looked upon this den into which he was being driven as a haven that seemed too good to be true. In there, he knew, he would no doubt stand at least a better chance against the bird; and in there, he told himself, he would rather face the lynx couple at close quarters than continue the hope-

less battle against those wings and that beak—those wings and that beak that would eventually blind him and so leave him a helpless victim for animals he would formerly have scorned.

The murderer of the fledgling owl, however, was never allowed to enter that lynx den. Just as he bolted for it, indeed, the pair whose territory he had once violated sprang out to meet him.

They had seen his approach; they had seen his weakened state; and, whereas they would not have dared to attack him had he been in normal condition, they took advantage of the creed of the wild that tells all its denizens to mercilessly tear down a crippled enemy. So, one from each side, they leaped for his throat, while the owl hovered over them.

CORNERED as he was, the panther gamely surged toward them and down they went in a squirming and spitting and snarling mass of fur. The valiancy of the big cat, however, did not last for long. Veteran of many a combat that he was, he was sufficiently cunning to pull himself from beneath the enraged pair and start blindly off down the slope before the other cats could disentangle themselves.

But he had, for the first time, forgotten the grim tiger of the skies.

He remembered quickly. There came a hiss, a mottled form shooting toward him like an arrow, and a wing-tip that almost touched his eyeball. He went, at that, completely wild. Closing his eyes, and emitting a shriek of demoniacal weirdness that told his brain had utterly gone, he leaped into the air at those elusive feathers. For he had forgotten again—forgotten that lynx pair.

Probably he never remembered them; probably he scarcely realized what it was when his doom came. Before his feet had once more touched the earth, those angry felines who had never forgotten the bully had made their spring. This time, taking him complately unawares, their fangs sank in—sank in and in around the vulnerable jugular as the owl stayed ready to head off further retreat of his enemy.

There was no need. When the three of them went down, now, the tawny form was underneath. For a moment, it is true, there was a mighty tossing, but then that ball of fur sagged, the under body twitched spasmodically, just once, and instantly became inert as the lynx couple started in to rip the carcass to shreds.

Coolly, stoically, the avenger of the air took one final look at his vanquished enemy and sailed off toward the summit of Old Hedgehog. He paused, again, on the tallest peak of rock, gazing off below him at Big Basin Lake.

Down on that shore, there at his favorite spot for frogs, he had lost the one youngster left him; but down on that other slope, behind him, lay the mangled body of the wanton killer—the body of the killer whom *he*, and *he* alone, had driven to his doom. And slowly, peace once more with him, he flew toward the ancient oak that had been his proud home for years.

The justice of the wild had been meted out—the justice of the wild that is frequently so much fairer than the justice of the human and civilized world.

The Most Mysterious Happening in My Life

AS RELATED BY

ALICE BRADY

to

BIDE DUDLEY

ALICE BRADY, one of America's foremost young emotional actresses, now starring in "Bride of the Lamb," sat in her dressing-room at Henry Miller's Theatre and pondered over my question: "What is the greatest mystery you ever encountered?"

"Well," she said, "it is an interesting query. It is my belief that a mystery finds it difficult to remain one, if the person it confronts searches diligently for a solution."

"Then you mean that all mysteries can be explained?" I asked.

"No! I believe there are what might be called 'material mysteries' and another kind. The 'material' sort can be explained.

"If you think you see a ghost and decide to investigate, there is something to inquire into—something definite. The ghost may prove to be a sleep-walker or a practical poker—but it is there for dissection purposes.

"The other sort of mystery cannot be explained. It offers nothing one can attack. Rather, it is a state of mind concerning something which does not seem mysterious and does not change. Do you understand what I mean?"

"Well," I replied guardedly, "yes and no."

"Mostly no," said Miss Brady with a smile.

"Almost entirely no," I said.

"Well," she went on, "I have one of those unsolvable mysteries and I'll tell you about it. It concerns a sapphire ring of rather heavy design. I bought it at an auction sale of the effects of a deceased eccentric, understood to be a titled Frenchman. I was told Napoleon once wore it.

"Now the point of my whole story is the fact that this ring seemingly inspires anyone who possesses it when a fighting spirit is needed, or wanted."

"The possession of it lends courage?" I asked.

"Yes, and even the sight of it appears to have that effect on some people. Listen!

"NOT long ago I was in my bedroom in my East 55th Street home. It was after midnight. On my dresser

was the ring and near my bed was my dog, Sammy. I had just dozed off when I was awakened by Sammy growling.

"He was excited. I could neither see nor hear anything unusual, so I spoke to him and he quieted down. It wasn't long until he was growling again. I decided to do a little investigating.

"Opening the door into the hall, I listened. For the moment all was quiet, but suddenly I heard a 'S-z-z-z' as though someone was using a saw or a file somewhere. Steadily, at intervals, came the sound and I was almost sure a burglar was at work.

"'Sic him, Sammy!' I commanded in a low tone.

"The dog ventured half-way down the stairs and came leaping back, growling more than ever. The noise continued. Here was a sort of a mystery and it was rather a terrifying one.

"At that point I thought of my jewelry. I picked up my sapphire ring and slipped it on one of my fingers. Strange as it may seem, I immediately became imbued with a determination to investigate that sound in person. I started down the stairs feeling like a real fighter.

"Just before I reached the last step my English maid appeared before me. She was in her night-clothes.

"'What's the matter, Miss?' she asked. 'Is there hennything wrong?'

"'Did you hear a peculiar noise?' I queried. 'It sounded like someone sawing.'

"'If you will hexcuse me, Miss,' she replied, 'that wasn't no saw. It was my hasthma. I 'ave been spray-in' my throat with the hatomizer.'

"My mystery vanished in thin air. I have told you this tory merely to impress you with the fact that I found some sort of uncanny inspiration in the ring. Now for another by way of illustrating the same thing!

"LAST summer I was abroad and, as I always do in the course of my travels, I visited Paris. One night I went to a small café in Place Teatre, in the Montmartre section, accompanied by a man friend. I was wearing the sapphire ring.

"We took a table in a corner and ordered a light meal. The music was playing—it was an American jazz band—and people were dancing. We preferred merely to sit and talk.

"At another table near us was a funny-looking little elderly man, facing me. His hair was gray and he had choppy whiskers. His bearing was that of an old soldier, but the thing I noticed most about him was the sharpness of his eyes.

"He was alone at the table, eating meat and sipping wine. After a while I got the impression he was tremendously interested in me. His gaze made me a bit nervous.

"'Don't worry about him,' said my escort. 'He's just one of those old Frenchmen who sit around cafés waiting to die.'

"As we continued our discussion of various subjects, my sapphire ring seemed to become a bit heavy so I removed it from my finger and placed it on the table.

"About this time a little old woman, poorly dressed, approached the table of the man next to us. In French she addressed him as Jean and asked him for money. He was disturbed.

"'Go home!' he commanded. 'Do not bother me. A soldier likes young smiles. Age he must not know. Now go!'

"She bowed her head in a despairing way. 'But I am hungry, Jean,' she protested.

"He scowled and pointed to a piece of meat before him. 'Take it,' he said. 'Take it and get out!'

"The woman picked up the meat in her bare hand and was turning to

leave when something on our table attracted the especial attention of the man. He became mildly excited. Pulling the old woman's head down, he whispered to her.

"She nodded obedience and began a round of the room, crooning and carrying her piece of meat. My impression was that he had commanded her to solicit alms. Incidentally, I had forgotten that my ring lay on the table.

"Reaching us, the old woman dangled the piece of meat before us and dropped it on the table. Others laughed and we took it as a joke. I handed her a ten-franc note and, picking up her meat, she moved on. She stopped next at the old man's table and, dropping the meat before him, said:

"'Keep your dirty food! I have money.' Then she left the place.

"WITH the attention of the entire assemblage centred on him the old man began to act queerly. He put the meat back on a plate and, arising, assumed the mien of a soldier of high rank.

"'Attention!' he commanded, in French. 'Forward march!'

"With that he led his imaginary soldiers about the room much to the delight of the crowd. After he had put his phantom army through an assortment of maneuvers, he went through a door and began ordering the trees off the grounds. He regarded them as unfriendly to his 'army' and was determined to rout them.

"The orchestra played a military march and the old fellow continued his strange antics for ten minutes. Then he disappeared. The band leader came to our table, smiling.

"'Perhaps, Miss Brady,' he said, 'you'd like to know a little about that old man. He is more than eighty years of age. Once he was a great soldier, people tell me, but now he and the old woman you saw live meagrely on a small pension. Whatever money they may have for clothes he uses.

"'He insists he must maintain his dignity—the dignity of a soldier. He comes here about once a week, but never until tonight have I known him to do anything but sit quietly, eat scantily and pose. I don't know what set him off tonight. Maybe his brain snapped.'

"I thanked the musician and he went back to his post. The dancing was resumed and we decided to leave. It was then that I received a shock. My sapphire ring was gone.

"I looked everywhere for it—all in vain. I called the headwaiter, then the proprietor, explaining the situation and demanding that something be done to recover my sapphire. They became greatly excited and jabbered away in French, but could offer no explanation of the ring's disappearance.

"By this time I had recovered my composure and, having no desire to continue the scene, which was making me the centre of unwelcome attention, I instructed the proprietor to have the police investigate and notify me as to the outcome at my hotel.

"As my escort left me at the hotel entrance he promised to return to the café the next day and see what had been done regarding the recovery of the ring. I went to bed and tried to sleep, but didn't succeed very well. My loss and the mystery that surrounded it worried me.

"EVERY few hours for two days I telephoned the café to ask about the ring. Each time the proprietor told me no trace of it had been found and apologized profusely. On the third day I had a pleasant surprise.

"A messenger boy delivered at the hotel's desk a poorly wrapped package addressed to me. It was sent to

my room. On opening it I found the ring and with it a note, in French. It was from the old ex-soldier. Translated, it read:

Dear Mademoiselle—It was the ring, the marvelous sapphire. When I saw it, I was fired with military zeal. Thus did it affect me. I was a great soldier again and my army was with me as in the days of old. The sight of the ring did this.

Seeing it—ah, I must get it. There was Joan, my lowly woman. I commanded; she obeyed. She went to your table, dropped her meat—the hungry pig—on your ring. Picking it up she brought it to me.

I put it on my finger. At once I was a dictator. My army was imploring me to lead them against the enemy. France once more was at war. Lead them I did. I was victorious—a great triumph. Then I sought my home.

But, my dear lady, the great General Jean is not a thief. Common sense returned and I knew I had been guilty of what seemed a crime. It was not I. The influence of the ring was the thief. Now no more do I look at the sapphire. But I command and Joan obeys. She wraps it up and, with this note, takes it to the messenger office.

Now you have the ring—the great sapphire of battle—and I, the great General, am once more the poor pensioner. My humblest apologies, dear lady, and may your life be ever happy.

Do not part with the sapphire. It is uncanny. I do not understand. Forgive, forget and the appreciation of an old fighter will be yours forever.—Jean.

"I still have the sapphire. It is in my safety-box at a local bank. Now and then I wear the ring, but it never inspires me to command invisible soldiers or order unfriendly trees to retreat.

"However, I am a bit superstitious and I firmly believe the sapphire lends me determination. When I have a big problem to solve I put the ring on my finger. Immediately I feel like a winner and usually I win.

"That's all—there isn't any more, except that now you have my mystery. What is there about the ring that inspired the old fighter and why does it lend me determination?"

"I don't know, Miss Brady," I replied.

"And no one else does," she concluded.

The Eleventh Story of this Series
will be told by

David Warfield

It will appear in our next issue —
Out July 1

The Murillo Mystery

By BEULAH POYNTER

A TWO PART STORY—PART I.

CHAPTER I.

AT MIDNIGHT

AS the door closed behind his visitor Anthony Herndon rose quickly, and, with his hands thrust deep in the pockets of his lounging robe, stood gazing intently at two paintings that hung over the fireplace. His thin, rather austere lips were set grimly, and his shaggy gray brows met in a dark frown over his aquiline nose.

For some little time he stood absolutely motionless. Then he drew a deep, audible breath, almost a sob, crossed abruptly to a smoking cabinet and taking a cigar from the humidor lighted it. Then again he looked at the pictures, shrugged his shoulders, and pressing a wall button reduced the illumination in the room to the one lamp by his writing table.

Almost furtively he walked noiselessly to the door which led into the corridor and, opening it a trifle, peered out into the dimly lighted passage. Satisfied that there was no danger of being disturbed he closed the door, retraced his steps to the table, and opened a drawer.

From it he drew a revolver and a leather wallet. He placed the revolver on the table, concealed it with some loose leaves of fool'scap paper, and the wallet he carried to a wall safe hidden behind a panel of tapestry in the extreme end of the room between rows of book shelves.

After carefully closing the safe and locking it, he returned to the table. There was a deep, comfortable chair beside it, with a foot-stool. He sat down, folded his hands and smoked leisurely, contemplating the paintings under half-closed eyelids. Then abruptly he tossed his half-burned cigar into the fire, picked up a pen and began to write.

For an hour he wrote steadily. Only the scratch of his pen as it scrawled across the paper, the rustle of the leaves as he tossed them aside and the crackle of logs broke the silence in the room. Once he shifted his position, reached for a bibliography of painters and glanced through a brief outline on the life of Leonardo da Vinci, then continued with his work.

A clock in the hallway boomed eleven times. He placed his pen beside the sheet of manuscript he had written, rose and stretched his arms over his head, shaking his tall, angular body as a dog shakes himself, then walked slowly to one of the two French windows which opened onto a wide veranda.

OUTSIDE it was drizzling as it had been all day. A heavy fog enveloped the bare, leafless trees, casting a gray shroud over their towering outlines. Its chill seemed to penetrate the room and Herndon shivered. Again, when he rose from the window, his eyes turned toward the paintings, and remained there as he pressed a bell.

A thin, sandy-haired man answered the summons.

"You rang, sir?"

"Yes. Why did you answer? Where's Annie?"

"She's gone home, sir. After dinner she received a telephone call that her mother was very sick, and Mrs. Herndon said she might leave at once. I'm staying up in case Mrs. Herndon or Miss Margery might want something when they come in."

Apologetic in his manner, the man shifted nervously from one foot to the other.

"Mrs. Herndon? Did she go out?"

"Yes, sir. Directly after dinner. She took the limousine."

"Hem—I didn't know that. Tell her maid to inform Mrs. Herndon I would like to see her when she returns."

"Her maid—you mean—Jeannette, sir? She's gone also."

"Gone! Where?"

"Mrs. Herndon dismissed her yesterday morning. She was very upset, sir—Jeannette, I mean—and Miss Margery tried to speak to your wife about——"

"Never mind, Hayes. I'm not interested in her troubles. Ask cook to fix me some sandwiches and coffee, and send them up to me. I expect to write all night."

Hayes coughed nervously.

"It's cook's night off——" he began.

"Good Lord! Isn't there any one in the house?"

"No, sir. No one but me, but if you like, I could fix your supper. I'm quite a good hand at making sandwiches; during the War I——"

"I'll take your word for it," Herndon interrupted again, this time good-naturedly. Then, abruptly, he asked: "I suppose you don't know anything about paintings, do you, Hayes?"

"Paintings, sir? No, not exactly. I know when I fancy one and think its colors are pretty. But they say you know about all there is to know, that you're a real authority on 'em, and that you've some pictures that cost a fortune."

Herndon smiled, the pleased smile of a man getting along in years, who has been humored in his favorite hobby.

"Turn on that light and look at these."

The butler obeyed him, and blinked faded eyes at the oils he indicated.

"Well, what do you think of them?"

"They're pretty, sir, but they're not new, are they?"

"New? Of course not. They were painted in the seventeenth century, about 1640."

"I meant that you've had them some time. Miss Margery showed them to me when you first bought them, and told me that they had cost you as much as this house. They're very little to be so valuable, aren't they, sir?"

HERNDON laughed.

"It isn't always size that counts. Did you ever hear of the Mona Lisa? No, I suppose not, but it's about the size of my Madonna and is almost priceless."

He pointed to the picture, on the right, of a Virgin and Child. The background was in dark neutral colors, an intermingling of green and brown and blue that brought into bold relief the exquisitely lovely features of the Virgin mother, whose great dark eyes stared straight ahead

as though looking with infinite compassion at the sins and foibles of a suffering world over the soft pink body of the infant of her heart.

The face was distinctly Castilian in contour, without the vivid splashes of color found in the old Italian masters, but warmly human—a woman of flesh and blood, loving, passionate, capable of great happiness as well as great sorrow.

"Yes, sir," Hayes mumbled, "yes, sir. But I like the other picture better. It's old, too, isn't it? I thought maybe when Miss Margery first showed it to me, that it was Mrs. Herndon; but it isn't, is it?"

"Hardly." The thin lips twitched. "The likeness between my wife and the Doña Estabán is startling. You show good taste in admiring that picture, Hayes. In my opinion it is by far the most beautiful of all Murillo has painted. Note the hair, each thread like a strand of living gold; the texture of the skin, pallid, waxen, yet one feels that the warm blood is close to the surface and will suffuse the cheeks at a word or touch; the dark eyes, luminous, expressive, slightly oblique, giving a hint of the exotic to otherwise Latin features.

"One wonders who Doña Estabán was. Catalinian, perhaps, with her golden hair and midnight eyes, but the nose is pure Castilian, the slender, high bridge, the sensitive, delicate nostrils. One can almost see them quiver. And the mouth, full-lipped, crimson, half parted—whimsical, yet sensual. A wicked mouth, Hayes, in its promises, its allure, yet virginal curves."

He chuckled suddenly at his own enthusiasm and abruptly changed the subject.

"That will do now. I've not the time to continue raving about my treasures. Fetch my supper when you have it ready. And don't forget to tell Mrs. Herndon that I wish to see her."

He crossed again to his desk, sat down and once more lifted his pen.

"Yes, sir."

In the hallway Hayes extinguished the electricity, leaving only a small frosted globe lighted over the head of the stairs at the extreme end of the corridor. He tried the door leading to the veranda, satisfied himself that it was locked, then walked rapidly down the passage and entered the dining-room. Passing through, he found his way into the pantry.

ON the second shelf above him were some tinned foods, potted meats and chicken, jellies. He hesitated a moment, then lifted a glass of *pate de fois gras*, and with it went into the kitchen.

It was a large room done in blue and white, with a tiled floor, and enameled tables and chairs. Humming softly under his breath, he lighted the gas, filled the coffee percolator with water, and set about to cut bread for his sandwiches.

Suddenly he tensed. He had distinctly heard the front door open. Above his head hung a clock. He noted the hour. A quarter past eleven. Either Mrs. Herndon or Miss Margery had returned. He waited a summons and when none came settled back in a chair with a newspaper until the coffee should be ready to serve.

It was raining harder now, and a wind had risen, crooning through the trees outside and rubbing the bare branches together. Water beat against the window and ran in little trickles down the glass.

Hayes stirred uneasily as a draft hit the back of his neck, and as he did so he heard a shot.

The newspaper fell from his hands and his ruddy face became drained of all color. For a second he stood

hesitant, fearful, uncertain whether the sound had come from above or below, then he sprang through the swinging door, stumbled awkwardly across the dining-room into the dimly lighted corridor.

Almost simultaneously a man came from the library and started toward the door leading into the garden. Hayes had a glimpse of a long tan motor-coat and a crushed felt hat before he could summon courage enough to cry in a shrill voice, "Stop!"

The man whirled, took deliberate aim at him and fired.

Hayes staggered, flung up his arms, and with a gurgle fell across the dining-room threshold.

The next moment the hall was plunged into darkness.

CHAPTER II.

FROM THE CASCADES—HOME

"NOW take my advice, Margery, and forget about it. After all it's none of your affair. What your father doesn't know isn't going to hurt him."

The girl raised her eyes and looked steadily across the table at the speaker. Her chin quivered, and as she crumbled a bit of roll into little bread pills she seemed dangerously near to tears.

"I suppose," she said hesitatingly, "that I am hopelessly old-fashioned, but it will never seem right to me for a married woman to accept the attentions of other men. Dolores should not have married father if she did not intend to be faithful to him."

"Just because we happen to run into her at the Cascades dancing with a good-looking chap doesn't mean that she's unfaithful," her companion answered impatiently.

"You misunderstand me." A faint color stained the girl's cheek. "You're so literal, Jerry. Oh, I know father is difficult at times, but you've no idea how he loves her, and if he dreamed that—that——" Her gaze wandered.

"I hope your conscience wont compel you to tell him what you've seen tonight."

"Of course not. I'm not an utter fool."

"You don't like her," he answered with the frankness of a friendship of long standing. "The best of you women have an element of cat in you."

"I don't *dislike* her, Jerry, and I've tried to care for her—honestly I have. I came home from school quite prepared to love her. It was rather thrilling to have a celebrity in one's family—all the girls *envied* me, and I didn't mind the newspaper notoriety one bit.

"Yet, somehow, she froze me, Jerry. I can't explain just what I mean. She is always charming to me. No one could be nicer or more—courteous—courteous, that's it exactly.

"I can't be natural with her—and"—she hesitated, lifted a glass of water to her lips—"I wouldn't really care—at least, not so much at the difference she's made in our home, if she had made father happy. But she hasn't. He's changed terribly in the last six months."

"In what way?"

"He's grown morose—irritable. At times he seems bitter. I'd say disillusioned if his attitude toward her wasn't quite as it has always been."

"Changed toward you, you mean, then?"

She nodded. "Perhaps I imagine it. I'm foolishly sensitive. But he never chats with me any more, seems to be annoyed if I ever go in his study, and sometimes when I see him staring off into space there is absolute agony in his expression. You—don't suppose he realizes that

—he knows Dolores isn't always—truthful, and is going about with other men?"

"I THINK you're an imaginative little worrier," he bantered. "Jumping at a lot of foolish conclusions. Your father always was a queer duck. He may love your stepmother to distraction, but I'll wager he loves his Da Vincis and Murillos and Botticellis a great deal more. And that doesn't set well with the lady.

"Why, great Lord, Marge, just contrast the life she's leading now with the one she had before she was married! The whole town was wild about La Bonita Español!"

"Father offered her honorable marriage, an old name, and money," the girl replied softly. "Not all the others did."

"Prejudiced."

"I hope I'm not going to lose you too, Jerry."

"What d'ye mean?"

"Didn't you recognize who was with her?"

"Good Lord! You don't mean—" his eyes widened.

"Yes. It was Ward."

"Ward Gresham?"

"Yes."

For a moment he was silent, then he reached across the table and pressed the slim white hand that toyed with a roll.

"I say, old girl, I'm sorry. Ward! Of all men! Why, I thought he was riveted to your side."

She smiled. "I—I'm not really hurt at his desertion, Jerry. I don't suppose I loved him or I'd be heartbroken. But he was rather a—a—habit, and the humiliation cuts. But I'm not thinking of myself, truly I'm not. It's daddy. I did so hope—— Jerry, let's go home. I can't eat anything. Do you mind much?"

The young man looked across the dancing space to a small table near the orchestra, and as he did so the woman seated with her back to them turned slowly and met his glance with large curiously oblique black eyes. Then she quietly bent her head in recognition of him and returned her attention to her escort.

Jerry whistled under his breath.

"You've got to hand it to her, Marge, she has the poise of a grand duchess. Just saw me, and never blinked an eyelash. She knows you're with me, too, for there's no other carrot-top in New York like yours. Either she's *not* trying to put anything over on your father, or she has a great faith in your discretion."

"I hope you're right about the former," replied the girl, pulling the folds of a kolinsky wrap about her slim bare shoulders. "I don't want to misjudge her, Jerry, or be unkind, or—or catty. And I'm not jealous. Oh, I'm not. That would be as foolish as a caterpillar resenting the beauty of a humming bird."

"Well, you're no mean looker, yourself, if a fellow likes red hair. I don't." His wide mouth parted in an impish grin. "Say, Marge, when are you going to marry me?"

"Never. Call the waiter, please. I want to get out as soon as they start dancing. Otherwise I couldn't avoid speaking to them when we pass their table."

"What are you going to do about it when you get home?"

"I shan't say anything to her, unless she mentions it, and I don't think she will. She told me she was staying in tonight."

As the boy gave his check to the door man, Margery said impulsively: "Send me home in a taxi, Jerry. It's a long way and such a bad night it's foolish for you to go up with me when I'd just as soon go alone."

"I don't like to do that."

"I'm wretched company, and if I made you ride up with me, I'd feel

compelled to make conversation and I'm perfectly stupid when I'm trying to be entertaining. Please, I've a headache and would much rather be alone."

"All right. If I'm not wanted, I wont intrude." He motioned to a taxi.

"Not angry, Jerry?"

"Furious!"

He smiled reassuringly. "Telephone me at the club when you get home. I wont feel satisfied until I know you are safe."

"I do believe you care a little for me," she said.

"What makes you think I didn't?"

"Because of my red hair."

"I love you in spite of it. Good-night, dear. Don't forget to phone."

SHE saw him still standing in front of the hotel as the taxi rounded the corner, his broad shoulders thrown back and his hands in his pockets.

The half-smile faded from her lips as the car swung into the traffic jam and she began to sob softly, noiselessly, letting the tears roll down her cheeks without attempting to dry them.

The pavement was dangerously sleek and wet, and the driver was compelled to go slowly, blowing his horn often and stopping suddenly at shrill traffic signals.

At 110th street, he turned into St. Nicholas and headed northward through Van Cortlandt Park, practically leaving the city behind. Here and there a few private estates loomed up with dark, unlighted houses as though their occupants had already retired.

The girl bent over and tapped the window. "It's the last one on your right," she informed him. "You probably wont be able to see it from the road, but there's a gate you can drive through."

The head-lights of the taxi threw a ribbon of light on the dark, snake-like stretch of straight pavement before them, but on neither side was a house visible. Trees, stark and shadowy, seemed to stand sentinel over unused property, and apparently there was no habitation within miles.

The engine chugged steadily for a quarter of a mile, then she tapped on the window again. "There it is. Be careful, please. The driveway leads up to the door."

Once inside the grounds, which extended a hundred feet or more from the road, the lights burning in the library were hazily distinguishable through the fog. The girl pulled her furs about her, and on the stone stairs of the veranda dismissed the driver and pulled the iron knocker on the front door.

Not hearing any footsteps inside, she fumbled in a little mesh bag she carried, and after finding a key inserted it in the lock. The corridor she entered was in absolute darkness, but under a crack of the door that opened into the library, which her father had converted into a study since his marriage, there was a shaft of light.

"Working late as usual, poor old dad!" She hesitated a moment, then knocked softly. "Daddy, may I come in? I want to say good-night to you."

There was no answer and she pushed the door open. Apparently the room was empty, for no familiar figure sat huddled in the arm chair by the table, though the papers scattered about its polished surface and littering the rugs before it gave evidence of the work Herndon had been doing.

She glanced toward the window, expecting to find him there if not at his desk. When she turned, she recoiled with a cry of horror.

Her father lay on the floor, directly before the fireplace, on his face, his

left arm crumpled under him, his right extended, and on the white tiles where his head had struck was a slowly widening pool of blood.

"Daddy!" she sobbed, "are you hurt? What has happened?"

She ran to his side and attempted to raise him in her arms. His body slumped forward limply, and his glazed, wide eyes stared up into her own. Even before she saw the blood-clotted wound in his temple, she realized he was dead.

She dropped him, choking back a scream in her throat, staggered to her feet, and ran into the corridor.

"Hayes! Hayes! Come here!" she called. "Hayes!"

SHE stumbled blindly in the dark, terror and shock causing her to lose her equilibrium. With trembling, uncertain fingers she tried to find the light button. "Hayes!" she called again, her heart pounding so hard it made her breast pain. "Hayes!"

Where was he? Why didn't he answer? Had he gone to bed? Why couldn't she find the light? The floor was rocking with her. She felt dizzy, sick. The walls seemed to be closing in about her. Suppose she should faint before she could summon the police, or a doctor! Why hadn't she let Jerry come home with her?

Had her father taken his own life? That wound in his temple! The blood!

Suddenly her groping fingers found what she was searching for, and a brilliant light glowed in the ceiling. As it did her frightened gaze picked out the huddled figure of the butler lying in the doorway between the hall and the dining-room.

She felt an impulse to laugh, to shriek hysterically, and she crushed one hand against her mouth, swaying her body backward and forward, while red, stinging lights danced before her eyes.

After a little she gained control of herself and, shuddering, drew closer to the supine figure. She touched his face, found that it was warm, and sobbed with relief. He was alive. At least there was that much to be thankful for.

Almost mechanically she went to the telephone and took down the receiver. When Central did not respond, she rattled it frantically, replaced it, took it down again, listened, then turned away as she heard a faint moan behind her.

The moan was repeated, but when she bent over the butler and spoke to him, he didn't reply nor open his eyes. She saw blood on his right cuff and became sickened, backing away with her hands over her eyes.

Again she tried the telephone, sobbing aloud, and beating the wall with her doubled fist, as though that would bring a response from the other end of the wire.

At last, hopeless of securing aid that way, she began to run up and down the hall in a confused fashion, wringing her hands and talking aloud until a sudden determination to go after assistance herself made her dash from the house and run to the garage.

The heels of her silver slipper sank deep in the sticky mud of the pathway. The wind whipped open her coat, and the downpour of rain drenched her white satin gown before she reached the stone structure at the end of the pathway.

Beyond question, Shields, the chauffeur, had taken her stepmother into the city, but if the garage was unlocked her own car was there, a low-swung sporty roadster.

The door was closed but she breathed a sigh of thankfulness when she found that the padlock was swinging loose. It took but a moment to run the car out of the building and into the driveway. Then, with the rain

beating in torrents upon her bare head, she turned out of the grounds and headed toward Van Cortlandt.

Her hands felt numb on the wheel, her head was swimming and every few seconds her fingers slipped. The street lights before her seemed to dance about, first on one side of the road, then on the other. Several times she skidded dangerously, and she had difficulty in sitting upright. Her eyes were heavy as though she had not slept for nights, and there was a pounding in her ears, a sick thumping in her breast.

Where was she going? Oh yes, for a doctor—no—a policeman—Jerry—a telephone—the police station.

Her head dropped. She felt herself slipping, her fingers relaxed their hold, her body slumped forward, and lights, gray ribbon pavements, the elevated structure ahead, all vanished in thick smothering waves of black.

CHAPTER III.

CLANCY

YOUNG Officer Clancy glanced at his watch and noted with satisfaction that it was close to midnight. He crossed the Concourse, swung under the concrete structure where the road led into Van Cortlandt Park, then stepped aside with an ejaculation of surprise and dismay.

A car was headed straight toward him coming at a speed that would have been dangerous for driver or pedestrian on smooth dry roads—but on a night like this!

Almost before the cry died on his lips the car had passed him and in that brief glance he had seen that there was no one at the wheel and that apparently the machine was empty.

"Great Lord!" he exclaimed and whirled abruptly.

The car skidded, careened, then with a crash collided into the stone pillar of the bridge and came to a sudden stop.

Clancy heard the crash of a broken wind-shield, then he leaped forward. He recognized the car at once as one he had seen many times with a slim auburn-haired girl at the wheel.

Save for the broken wind-shield and the head-lights it seemed to have suffered no damage. The engine was still chugging. But as he opened the door he drew back with a smothered exclamation.

Huddled in the seat, her body bent forward so that she had been unseen from the road, was the girl with the auburn hair! The kolinsky wrap she wore had fallen off one bare shoulder and the shimmering folds of a white satin evening gown gleamed white and lustrous under his pocket flash. There were red stains on the gown and for a moment Clancy thought she was dead.

He lifted one limp hand which hung at her side and felt that it was warm. The pulse at her wrist beating steadily, if slowly, reassured him that, although she might be injured, at present she was only in a faint. Probably she had been hurt by the collision or flying glass. He raised her a trifle, and looked critically at her face, her slim, bare arms. There were no cuts nor bruises visible.

Whatever had caused the blood stains and the deathlike swoon had occurred before the car collided with the post.

She moved uneasily, opened her eyes, then gave a frightened cry.

"It's all right," he soothed her. "I'm an officer; you've had a narrow escape, but I believe you only fainted."

"Fainted?" she repeated wonderingly. Then she suddenly gave a low moan. "Everything became black. I

wanted a policeman—what happened? There's glass here."

"You're lucky you aren't smashed into smithereens," he muttered grimly. "God knows how you escaped."

"Escaped?"

"That post; you ran into it. What's the trouble? You wanted an officer. What can I do for you?"

She shuddered. "I tried to phone—but—nobody answered. My father—my father—is dead—on the library floor—there's blood on him—as if—as if some one had murdered him!"

"Good God!"

"You'll come with me, wont you?"

"Surely. Are you sure you aren't hurt?"

"Quite sure. I'm all right now. It was stupid of me to faint. Let's hurry, please. I hope the car will run."

"I don't think there's anything smashed but the head-lights and wind-shield. Anyway the engine seems to be O.K. D'ye feel like driving or shall I?"

"I can," she answered.

He crossed around and seated himself beside her. After some little difficulty, the car was backed into the road and headed northward.

Neither spoke. Without headlights to guide them on the slippery pavement, it was a dangerous journey and required a steady hand and cool nerve. At present the girl possessed neither, though Clancy classed her as a "plucky kid" and felt a keen sympathy for her.

At a cross section, he exclaimed tersely, "Here we are; slow down a minute. I'll put in a call."

"Call?"

"To headquarters."

"Oh. And—a doctor—Hayes needs a doctor."

"Sure. They'll send up the medical examiner." He leaped from the machine before it had stopped. "What's the name and address?"

"Herndon. Herndon Hall, Post Road."

"Not Anthony Herndon! Whew!"

"All set," he said quietly, returning after a moment. "Let 'er go."

The girl threw in the clutch and the car leaped forward.

"BETTER?" Clancy inquired as Margery smiled wanly into his face. In the hallway she had almost fainted again and the young officer had placed her on a bench near the stairway. "There now, take it easy. Just rest a minute, then get out of those wet clothes before you get the grippe or the 'flu.' I'll see what's to be done with the poor devil here."

Hayes had regained consciousness and was sitting on the floor nursing his injured arm and groaning, his face twisted with pain. He seemed to be dazed and at first unable to answer any questions.

Clancy examined the injured arm, saw that there was only a flesh wound, and stepping into the dining-room, looked about for a napkin to bind it up.

After first aid was applied to the butler's wound, Clancy said quietly: "Now, my man, tell me what's happened and what you know."

Haynes moaned. "I'm all confused, sir. I can't seem to remember anything. I hope I'm not going to die."

"Nonsense. You aren't hurt. Somebody took a pot at you, but fortunately for you the bullet only grazed the flesh of your forearm and landed in the wall here behind you." He placed his finger on a small hole in the oak panel of the wainscoting.

"A shot! You mean somebody tried to kill me! Oh, my God!" Hayes' teeth began to chatter and his face became lugubrious in its expression of terror.

"Pull yourself together!" Clancy shook his shoulders impatiently.

"Whether he tried to kill you or not, he didn't succeed, but that's more than I can say of your master."

"Mr. Herndon—isn't——?" The hunched shoulders stiffened.

"Mr. Herndon is dead." Clancy lowered his voice so that the quivering girl still seated on the bench would not hear.

"Dead!" shrilled the butler. "You—you don't mean—murdered?"

"That's what I want you to help me find out. Come on, what do you know?"

"You—you don't think I did it!" Hayes struggled to his feet, his face rat-gray in color, and his pendulous lower lip quivering.

"Of course not. Unless—you——" His eyes closed speculatively as they fastened themselves on the bullet-hole in the wall then wandered back to Hayes' bandaged arm. "No—you couldn't have done it."

"My God! No, sir! I—I—never fired a pistol in my life. I've always been afraid of firearms. I'm marked that way. I—let me think—I recall something—yes, sir. Mr. Herndon—in the library—the picture—the portrait of Mrs. Herndon—no, the one that *looked* like her—and supper. Oh, yes. I went into the kitchen to fix supper for him. Cook's night off. Sandwiches—that's it—sandwiches—*pate de fois gras.*"

"Never mind what kind of sandwiches—and——?"

"The shot. I heard it. The shot!" Excitedly he caught at Clancy's coat sleeve. "It scared me, but I came out here—almost at once, sir. There was a man at the library door. I called to him 'Stop!' And—he fired at me!"

"A man. What did he look like?"

"I can't tell exactly; it wasn't light in the hall. But I think he was not very tall—he wore a motor-coat—maybe a rain-coat, and a soft hat."

"Some one you'd ever seen before?"

"I think not."

"Did you see his face?"

"No, sir. I don't think so. It happened so suddenly I can't remember. I admit I'm a bit of a coward—I was perhaps too frightened to notice."

"Anything in his hands?"

"The pistol."

"I know that. And after the shot?"

"I—fell, and I don't recall anything more."

"Hm! Suppose you come out with me now?"

"In there?" Hayes shuddered as he looked toward the library, the door of which stood ajar. "Where the—the—oh, I couldn't. I can't abide blood or——"

"Come on." Clancy took his arm and half dragged him toward the open door.

"Do you need me?" Margery asked tremulously.

"I'd like to ask you some questions before the examiner comes, if you don't mind," Clancy answered. "But I'd advise you to change that wet clothing."

"Yes. I know. I'm going to. Yes." She rose wearily and started toward the stairs. "I wont be long."

Clancy crossed to the table noting the scattered sheets of manuscript, the position of the body, the French windows, locked on the inside, and bent over Herndon and touched him. On the outstretched right hand was a large Cabachon ruby set in platinum.

THE officer looked inquiringly at the butler. "What time did you hear the shot? Remember?"

"Yes, sir, distinctly. At eleven fifteen, exactly. I'd just looked at the kitchen clock. May I go, sir? I'm sick, truly I am."

"Just a minute. How long after you left Mr. Herndon did you hear it?"

"Why—not more than fifteen minutes I should say—er—maybe twenty. I heard the front door open and thought maybe Mrs. Herndon or Miss Margery had returned from downtown. When they did not ring for me—I——"

"Door opened?" Clancy interrupted. "And you didn't go to see who entered?"

"No, sir. I'd locked it after leaving Mr. Herndon, and knew no one could come in without a key."

"Who else was in the house at the time?"

"No one but me."

"And when you left Mr. Herndon he was as usual—in good spirits?"

"Yes, sir, I should say that he was. He talked more than he generally does. He spoke to me all about the paintings. Those up there, sir. Especially the one that looks like his wife, her he married six months ago. Perhaps you read about it in the papers. She's a Spanish dancer. He's a great one for paintings, Mr. Herndon, sir, and those—Murillos, I think he called them—are very valuable."

Clancy glanced upward. "Like his wife. Hm! and where is she now?"

"I don't know, sir. Perhaps Miss Margery can tell you. She left early in the limousine, just after Miss Margery. She's not one to stay home much. Young, you know, and pleasure loving."

"Did you admit any one into the house tonight?"

"Why yes, sir. Just after dinner, at eight-thirty or so, a gentleman called."

"Give his name?"

"No, sir. He said Mr. Herndon was expecting him, so I showed him in here. But he didn't do this, sir. I saw Mr. Herndon after that—quite alive and——"

"What did this caller look like?"

"Foreign. Perhaps Italian, maybe Spanish. Mrs. Herndon is Spanish. I thought he might be a relative of hers."

"Accent, eh?"

"Yes, sir, quite an accent."

"How long did he stay?"

"I don't know. Mr. Herndon let him out himself. But"—he hesitated—"I—he's dead—now—and I don't like to break a confidence but——"

"Well?" Clancy wheeled.

"Mr. Herndon said I was not to mention that call to any one. When I admitted the gentleman, I said I wouldn't—but under the circumstances——"

"Didn't you think that strange?"

"Yes—in a way. But Mr. Herndon was always peculiar. Most writers are, I understand."

"Did you hear anything that was said between them?"

"Certainly not. I'm not curious."

"Foreign accent. How old?"

"Middle-aged; he had a gray beard and very dark eyes, I recall that."

"Hm!" Clancy looked about carefully.

"Anything behind this tapestried panel?"

"Yes, sir, a safe."

Clancy pushed the panel aside and looked critically at the safe. It was locked, the bolt set.

"That'll do. Take another bracer, you'll need it when the examiner arrives."

The butler backed out of the room and in the corridor collided with a dark, heavy-set man in a blue uniform, who was followed by a smaller, rather dapper, gray-haired person carrying a medicine bag.

"Hello!" ejaculated the big man. "Look where you're going! Well, Clancy, what's happened? Murder? Here you, wait a second, I may need you," to the apologetic butler.

"I'm not sure, Captain," Clancy answered slowly. "It looks like it, from what the servant tells me, but"—he pointed to a shining ob-

ject directly under the library table, possibly a foot away from the dead man's outstretched hand—"again it may be suicide. There's the revolver, the position of the body, and no evidence of robbery."

CHAPTER IV

THE INITIALED REVOLVER

IN the little blue-and-white boudoir adjoining her bedroom, Margery dropped listlessly into a chaise lounge and sat for some moments staring at her reflected image in a cheval mirror directly opposite her.

Not that she saw her features. Everything was in a blur. Her mind was in a chaotic jumble. She was not conscious of either thought or feeling. Her brain seemed to be as numb and chilled as her body.

After some time she rose mechanically and changed her sodden garments for a blue satin pegnoir, elaborately trimmed with white fox.

At the dressing table she paused, ran a comb through the hair Jerry Lancaster had called red, patted some powder on her face, then added a little rouge. She was merely following the program of her evening's toilette.

Then calmly, with a pathetic youthful dignity, she closed the door after her and moved down the hallway and descended the stairs.

As she poised on the last step the young patrolman, Clancy, came into the passage. On seeing her he gave a little exclamation and motioned to her.

"Better now?" he inquired solicitously with a certain big-brotherly tenderness as he looked down at her. Without her furs and evening gown she appeared so much younger, so much more the little schoolgirl.

"Yes. Have the police arrived?"

"Yes. Captain McKinney is in there, and Doctor Andrews is with him. They want to ask you a few questions."

"I know. I expected them to do so."

One moment her eyes glanced toward her father still on the floor before the fireplace, then she averted her gaze and bowed gravely to the big man Clancy introduced as McKinney. The other man, Doctor Andrews, who had been kneeling beside the body, rose at her entrance, and she acknowledged the introduction to him with a faint smile.

"Sit down, Miss Herndon," McKinney said kindly, "I want you to help me out on a few things if possible."

"I shall be glad to do all I can," she answered.

She chose a chair facing the window, drew it a little to the centre and seated herself so that the large table obscured her view of the prone figure.

"This man here"—indicating Hayes with a nod of his head—"tells us a story that would indicate murder, but there has to be a motive for murder, so naturally robbery is the first thing that crops into our minds. But if a robbery has been committed the thief overlooked a very valuable ring. That one on your father's hand."

Margery's eyes followed his gesture.

"I don't think robbery can have been the motive," she said slowly. "My father never kept any money in the house; that is, none that I knew of. Possibly a few bills, enough for current expenses; never any large sums."

"Then the wall safe?"

"He usually locked his manuscripts in it every night. They were invaluable to him, probably worthless to anyone else, but he had more fear of someone stealing the

thoughts he put on paper than anything else he possessed—except, of course, his paintings."

"Those up there?" McKinney glanced at the Murillos. "Then they are genuine?"

"Oh, yes. He bought them when he was in Spain some years ago. They were very precious to him."

"Do you know the combination of the safe?"

"I did once. But father may have changed it since his marriage. Is it locked?"

"Yes."

"Suppose you try to open it."

SHE rose and crossed to the panel, pushed it aside and toyed with the combination for a few seconds, her straight, dark brows drawn in a little frown of concentration. Both McKinney and Clancy stood behind her watching the manipulation of her slim, ringless hands. There was a click and the door flew open.

A metal box almost filled the space. Margery lifted it out and extended it to the officer.

"This is the box father usually put his manuscripts in at night," she said quietly. "Shall I open it?"

"If you please."

The box was half-full of loose, closely written pages of yellow manuscript paper. There was nothing else in it.

"Are you sure he had no jewelry or money in here?" McKinney asked.

"Of course I can't say positively; but I never knew him to wear any jewelry other than that ring, and he paid practically all of the bills with checks, even the servants."

"H'm!" McKinney scratched his head speculatively. "Where did he keep his will?"

"His lawyer has it. Seddon is his name. John Seddon."

"And you don't think Mr. Herndon had any other papers that might have been of enough value to induce some one to murder him to gain possession of them?"

"No."

"Anyone else know the combination of this safe?"

"I can't say; though probably my stepmother does."

"Where is she now?"

A little spasm shot across her face. "She—I—left her at the Cascades—about an hour ago," she answered, hesitating.

"Alone?"

"Oh, no, with a—a family friend, Ward Gresham."

McKinney closed the metal box and replaced it in the safe.

"Well, that let's us out on the robbery motive," he said dryly. "Tell me, did your father have any personal enemies? Some one who bore him an ancient grudge or——"

"No. Oh, no," she interrupted quickly. "Why should he have? Father was the most peaceful man in the world. He had few friends, but certainly no enemies."

"Then why did he have a revolver in his possession?"

He lifted the weapon from the table as he spoke and held it so that she could see the initials A. H. engraved on the handle. The revolver was apparently a new one and the girl's eyes widened as she looked at it.

"I—I don't know," she stammered. "Are you sure this revolver was his?"

"Reasonably sure considering his initials are on it. You didn't know he possessed it?"

"No. Where—where—did you find it?"

"Under the table just out of reach of his hand—where it may have fallen if struck out of his hand by his assassin—or where he may have flung it as he was dying—after he fired the shot."

He punctuated each word, watch-

ing the color drain from the girl's face, leaving it waxen with two vivid spots of rouge on either cheek bone, in startling contrast to the chalk-white surrounding them.

Her hand fluttered up to her throat as though the pulse throbbing under the tender flesh were choking her.

"Fired the shot," she repeated. "You don't think—he—he killed himself, do you?"

"Frankly, no, but it isn't an impossibility."

HE laid the revolver back on the table, and sat down in the chair where Anthony Herndon had spent so many hours of his life while he wrote page upon page concerning his research.

"Miss Herndon," McKinney said abruptly, "is it customary for all of your servants to be absent on the same evening?"

"Why—why—no. I suppose it does seem strange there was no one in the house with father but Hayes, but"—she hesitated, and her fingers plucked nervously at the fur on her robe—"we haven't many servants at present. My stepmother is—er—a little difficult to please. Oh, don't misunderstand me—but she dismissed two of our maids a few days ago and no one has taken their place. Today her personal maid did something to annoy her, and—she gave her her notice to leave at once. So there only remain the cook, the butler, second maid and chauffeur—and a man who attends to the fires and does not live in the house.

"And the others—the parlor maid, cook, etc.—where are they?"

"Cook's night off," muttered Hayes from where he stood near the doorway, "and Annie's mother is sick—"

"So you said," McKinney snapped. "You knew the maid's mother was ill?" He turned to Margery.

"Yes. I saw her when she left the house. I don't understand what this has to do with father's death."

"Perhaps nothing at all. Was your father a happy man, Miss Herndon?"

"Ye-es, I—should say he was."

"Nothing preying on his mind? Quite the same as usual when you left him?"

"Quite—the same." She paused half a second before replying.

"No financial difficulties?"

"None that I knew of."

"You found the body, I understand. Just what did you do when you first discovered it?"

She studied a moment, then carefully recited all that occurred since she had separated from her companion in front of the Cascades.

As she finished, they were startled by the sound of an automobile drawing up to the front door. A key was heard to turn in the lock; the next moment a woman stepped into the hallway followed by a young man.

Before the library she paused, looked about questioningly, then abruptly crossed the threshold. In the brillantly lighted room her smooth coils of pale hair glowed like a molten mass of virgin gold. Her eyes, dark, set far apart and slightly oblique, were inky smudges in a face that was extremely pale and accentuated by the vivid crimson of the velvet gown which hung in straight lustrous folds from her slender shoulders. Her arms, bare save for numerous jeweled bracelets, were thin to emaciation, yet shapely, the blue veins giving a shadowy, almost greenish tinge to her skin. A beautiful woman, alluring, exotic, with a strange unhealthy fascination that communicated itself even to the hardened captain.

She poised uncertainly as if conscious of the picture she made, then as her eyes wandered about the room from one man to the other, the nostrils of her slender nose quivered

and seemed to grow pinched. Something like fear flashed across her face. Suddenly her gaze picked out the figure on the floor. She tensed, a shiver shook her as she stumbled forward, realizing that Herndon was dead.

The tension in the room snapped as she screamed, "Tony! Tony! Oh, *Madre de Dios!*"

"Dolores!" Margery sprang toward her as she flung out her arms and swayed forward, but the young man just behind her caught her before she fell.

CHAPTER V

ANNIE'S STORY

"OH, *Mio Dios! Mio Dios!*" moaned the woman, raising herself from the divan to which she had been carried. Shudders shook her from head to foot. She rocked her slender body backward and forward, sobbing alternately in Spanish, then in English, all the while staring at her husband.

"Who has done this?" she moaned. "Who has killed the best, the kindest man in the world?"

"Why do you think someone has killed him?" McKinney asked grimly.

She stiffened abruptly as if for the first time aware of his uniform.

"He is dead, is he not?"

"You are his wife?"

"Yes."

"Must be a shock to you, then."

"A terrible shock. I loved him so much—and to find him like this!" She began to moan again.

Margery turned away. The presence of Ward Gresham in the room with her dead father—Ward Gresham, who only three weeks before had been her affianced husband—the indelicacy of the situation, the brazenness of bringing him into the home to humiliate her made her quiver with unreasoning anger.

She felt if she were compelled to stand there and witness Dolores' display of grief she would shriek aloud. She had received a shock, yes, but to believe that the beautiful Spanish girl had loved the man she had married——!

"I may be excused?" she asked with quivering lips of young Clancy, who stood beside her.

"You certainly look all in. Is there anything I can do for you?"

She shook her head. "I—I want to telephone to a friend and my father's lawyer. You might see if you can get the numbers for me. I had difficulty with the phone before."

He followed her to the telephone. For a second he jiggled the receiver, then placed it on the hook and examined the wires.

"No wonder you had trouble," he said quietly. "The wires have been cut."

"You mean——"

"Everything was all set before that man came into the house," he explained slowly, "servants out of the way, the telephone wires cut, no one at home."

"But Hayes——" she puzzled. "Hayes was here."

"Perhaps Hayes will bear watching."

"Oh no!" she protested. "He's been with us for years, and was devoted to father."

"Then he was overlooked."

"You think it was murder?" she pleaded.

"It has to be."

A sharp ring on the doorbell caused her to give a startled cry. Clancy shrugged his shoulders.

"News hounds," he said. "I wonder they haven't got here before."

"Oh, I can't talk to them. It's cruel of them to come here, now."

"You don't have to talk," he an-

swered; "but you can't keep them out. I'll open the door."

AS he moved toward the entrance, Margery started up the stairs. A woman's shrill voice arrested her. She turned quickly and saw that, although two men, unquestionably newspaper reporters, had come into the hallway, Annie, the second maid, was with them.

The girl was protesting vehemently, and when she saw her mistress, she ran toward her.

"What d'ye think?" she cried excitedly. "I went all the way to Jersey, on a night like this, scared stiff 'cause of my mother, and she's no more sick than I am! Miss Margery, is it true, what those men say? Has Mr. Herndon been murdered?"

"Yes, Annie."

"My Gawd! What d'ye know about that? Do they know who done it?"

"No, Annie." Her chin quivered at the sympathy expressed on the maid's homely freckled face. "But the police are in there with him. Who called you, Annie? Who told you your mother was sick?"

"I dunno. I 'spose it was my brother, for he said 'This is Joe' when he talked to me on the phone, and my brother is the only Joe I know. He said, 'Ma's awful sick; beat it home as soon as you can.' When I got there and saw ma sitting up as pretty as you please and surprised tuh see me I bawled Joe out for fair, until I seen he didn't know any more about that telephone call than a Comanche Indian.

"Say"—she whirled on a young reporter who had edged close to her, and who had been making rapid notes on the border of a newspaper — "I hope you got an earful."

He grinned. "Why so snappy, sister? I'll put your picture on the front page and caption it 'young and beautiful'."

Margery moved uneasily as she saw she was about to become the target of his questions.

"I think," she said quickly, "you'd better go in there and tell the officers about the call, Annie."

She was about to mount the stairs when Ward Gresham approached her.

"Margery," he said quietly, "I want to talk to you. Isn't there some place where we can be alone for a few moments?"

Her cool eyes swept over his lithe six feet, his rugged, wholesome features, strong jaw, large, prominent, but well-shaped nose, serious gray eyes, wide, rather austere mouth, and she wondered at the paradox of him. Everything about him indicated strength of character, yet certainly he had shown none of these characteristics in the last three weeks.

"I don't think," she said at length, as with a certain bitter satisfaction she saw him writhe under her scrutiny, "that you and I have anything to say to each other, Ward. A week ago our little romance became a closed book. I've no desire to open it again, especially tonight, after what has happened."

"And it's just because of what has happened tonight that I've *got* to talk to you, Margery."

"Very well. It may be cold in the drawing-room, it's been closed for days. But our interview will be short."

CHAPTER VI

WARD BREAKS A PROMISE

SHIVERING with the chill of a room unused and unheated, Marjorie dropped into the first chair by the door.

"Don't sit there, please!" the young man exclaimed quickly.

"Why not?"

He laughed apologetically. "The blue of your dress and that green—they clash terribly."

"Rather esthetic, aren't you?" she drawled. But she rose and moved to another chair, one with rose-colored damask. "I hope this doesn't offend your artistic senses."

"A color discord—always rubs me the wrong way," he answered with a slight cough of embarrassment.

"Well?"

"Margery, you're thinking I'm all kinds of a cad, but you've got to know that I love you—that there's never been an hour, a moment, that I've ceased to love you—that regardless of appearances—of—my attentions to your stepmother—you are the only woman who counts for the snap of a finger in my life."

Her cheeks flared hotly.

"If that is so," she cried, "then you *are* a cad! Just what are you trying to do? Play her against me? If it had been any other woman—a stranger—but my own stepmother—my father's wife! You make me sick with shame for you!" She rose and started blindly toward the door.

"Margery! Margery, darling." He caught her arm and held her facing him. "Wont you understand? Do you think I wanted to hurt you? Wanted to be her escort? Hasn't your intuition told you *anything?*"

"My eyes have told me a great deal," she answered slowly. "I would have been blind if I hadn't seen the fascination Dolores had for you almost the first time you saw her—"

"The fascination a *case* has for a physician."

She laughed.

"It's the truth! Dolores Herndon, to me, has been only a patient! And any attentions I have given her have been at the request of your father!"

"Wha-at!" She drew away in amazement.

"He is dead. Perhaps I am breaking my word as a physician now—to tell you—but sooner than let you continue to believe me the fickle, unfaithful scoundrel you think me, I'd break any promise—even to a dead man!"

"I—I don't understand," she half sobbed.

"A month ago," he lowered his voice, speaking tensely, "your father sent for me. I found him in a nervous extremely upset condition. He had just discovered that his wife was a drug addict!"

"Drug addict?"

"I HAD suspected something of the kind when I first met her. He had no idea where she obtained the drug, and he wanted me not only to find out who supplied her, but, if possible, to prevent her using it, and, in time, to break her of the habit.

"I prostested at first, saying I was no detective, to gain information in an underhand way, but he appealed to my friendship. Above everything, he wished the secret kept from you. He had an idea you did not like Dolores and that the knowledge of her weakness would destroy any affection you had for her."

"Poor father! Then that was what aged him so fast in the last few months!" she murmured.

"Yes. She was vain enough to believe that nothing but a desire for her company prompted my invitations. But she did insist that Mr. Herndon know where and whenever we went any place, and impressed upon me the fact that she only accepted attentions from me because he was busy and did not care for night life, and that she was absolutely faithful to him in thought and deed."

"I'm glad of that," Margery said slowly. "But why—why didn't you tell me all this before—three weeks ago?"

"I gave him my sacred word," he answered quietly. "I didn't know how it would end. I loved you so deeply, felt that you loved me enough to believe in my love—and I was mistaken."

"Poor father," she whispered again, "and did you help her?"

"No." His face clouded. "That's the pitiful part of it. I've no more knowledge where the drugs come from than I had the day I first met her; am no more in her confidence than you are."

"And father is *dead*. What will become of her, Ward?"

"I'm wondering," he said slowly, "just how much it matters now."

"Ward!"

"I'm bitter, I suppose. These weeks have been hell. I almost lost you and nothing seems to matter but your poor little stricken face—your hurt." He touched a tendril of auburn hair with his lips. "No more distrust, Margery?"

"Never."

CHAPTER VII.

A HUNCH

BESIDES the reporters and officers and butler, another man was in the library. Margery recognized him as the chauffeur, Henry Shields. He had not been long in her father's employ, and she had rarely spoken to him, but those few times had sufficed to make her cordially dislike him.

She had not analyzed this dislike, but now as she saw his nonchalant attitude as he faced the police captain, the cynical, almost amused, smile on his good-looking face, she realized it was because the man had always appeared so self-satisfied, so certain of his position, so conscious that he was handsome.

Evidently McKinney had finished interrogating him, for he said abruptly: "That will do." Then he added to the freckled-faced Annie Mullin: "And you can go, too. I shan't need you further tonight."

"Thank Gawd!" Annie exclaimed heartily and darted toward the door. Shields took his cap from the table and moved leisurely after her.

"Don't like that bird," McKinney murmured *sotto voce* to Clancy; "but his alibi is perfect. In town with the car while Mrs. Herndon was at the Cascades. But——"

Margery glanced up quickly. She gave an excited pressure to Ward's hand on which her own rested, opened her lips as though about to speak, then closed them tightly.

The tapestry panel had been removed from the wall and flung over her father's body. She noticed this as she crossed to her stepmother's side.

"Dolores," she said, touching her shoulder.

The woman did not move. Her face seemed to have aged in the hour.

Margery slipped one arm about her, but Dolores seemed unconscious of the embrace. A horrible fascination for the object covered with tapestry held her spell-bound.

"Come, Dolores."

Between them, Margery and the young doctor assisted the apathetic woman up the flight of stairs to the apartment facing the garden on the second floor. Annie fluttered anxiously after. And Hayes, relieved at being permitted to leave the library, offered any aid possible while groaning lugubriously over his injured arm.

Ward stepped out of the room while Margery and the little maid removed the woman's clothing. The shock seemed to have completely numbed Dolores, for she made no effort to assist them, her arms hanging limp at her side, her eyes still blank, unseeing.

WHEN they had placed her in the big canopied bed and drawn the covers over her, Margery called to Ward.

"She's awfully strange," she said fearfully. "Just as though she didn't know what was going on at all. Is she ill?"

"Temperamental, high strung," he answered quietly, bending over her. "Have Annie stay with her tonight, and if she isn't better in the morning, I'll send out a nurse to take charge of her. You go to bed, dear. You need rest yourself. I don't think you can worry over her."

"I never dreamed she cared so much." She looked uneasily toward the bed. "I loved—father—but——"

"You've vitality and back-bone," he answered. "If you need me before daylight, telephone."

"The wires were cut, didn't you know?"

"No. Would you like to have me stay, then?"

"Will you? I'd be very grateful. It's awful with her like that, and father——" She shivered.

"All right, then. Now run along, dear. One patient is enough. Just tell me where you want me to camp, and I'll make myself comfortable."

"There's a room opposite father's," she answered, hesitating. "Annie will fix it up for you."

"Good-night."

He followed her outside, kissed her, then returned to Dolores' bedside. There was a puzzled frown on his face as he felt the fluttering, uneasy pulse and studied her face. Then abruptly he turned to the maid.

"That's all right, Annie, you needn't sit up after all. I'll stay with her for a little while. If I want you, I'll call you."

"But Miss Margery said tuh fix the room up for you. Don't you want me tuh do it?"

"No. I'll lie down on that sofa, if I'm tired."

From below came the sounds of tramping feet, the opening and closing of doors, the chug of motors. The police and newspaper men were leaving the house.

The girl stole out on tiptoe. When the door closed behind her, Ward crossed quickly to the dressing-table and made a hasty but complete examination of the contents of every compartment and drawer. Once he thought he heard the woman on the bed move, and he glanced over his shoulder. Her eyelids had drooped, but otherwise she had not changed her position.

The princess dresser claimed his attention and noiselessly he moved fragile garments of sheer silk and lace in his search; but he found no telltale bottle, no hypodermic syringe. He stopped suddenly, swung on his heel and looked toward the wardrobe where Margery had hung the ermine coat that Dolores had worn earlier in the evening.

He removed it from a padded hanger and ran his fingers over the soft silky fur. There was a bulge in the lining. He found an almost invisible pocket, and drew an audible breath as his reward appeared. The morphia—half a bottle of pellets—was in the chamois lining of the flap.

He tucked the bottle in his pocket and turned again to the bed. As he did so the woman gave a strangled cry and rose to a sitting posture. There was no recognition in the black eyes blazing into his, and the words she began to babble were an intelligible jumble of Spanish words.

Suddenly she flung the covers from her, struggled to her feet and started for the door. He caught her before she reached it. She clawed at him, shrieking, struggling with the strength of a demented person, and he found himself damp with perspiration before she collapsed again and he was able to place her on the bed.

There she lay panting, still muttering, her hands picking at the satin covers, her eyes wide, roaming in a wild fashion about the room. For a moment he hesitated, then he stepped into the bathroom, filled the hypodermic, injected it in her upper arm, and waited quietly for the result.

After a little, she breathed easier, her eyes closed, and the room became silent.

A SHAFT of pale light stole under the drawn blinds. It widened, became yellow, indicating the sun had decided to shine, after the storm of the night.

He crept softly into the hallway, down the stairs and paused before the library door, every sense acutely tuned for any sound from above. A snore just beyond startled him until he recalled that unquestionably an officer had been left to guard the body, and he saw in the dim light the young patrolman, Clancy, crouched in an armchair, his chin huddled on his chest, fast asleep.

Deciding to risk awakening him, Ward turned the knob noiselessly and stepped into the library. Only the lamp on the table was burning, but the early morning light sifted through the deep windows throwing a gray misty glow over the gruesome mound on the floor.

Ward pressed the electric button, then, leaning against the wall, stared steadily at the paintings over the fireplace. He crossed slowly until he stood directly under them, then abruptly he moved the footstool, mounted it and ran his fingers over the rough oil of the Doña Estabán. Then he glanced down at his open palm.

"Hey! Don't you know you're not allowed to touch anything?"

The physician swung about so quickly at the intrusion that he almost lost his balance, but he laughed easily when he saw Clancy's blinking eyes and sleep-swollen countenance.

"I've not touched anything I shouldn't."

"What are you doing, then?"

"Merely admiring these paintings."

Clancy grunted incredulously. "Funny time to do it. What's the idea?"

Ward stepped off the stool and back to the centre of the room.

"I know a little about art," he said slowly, "and I've been wondering if those paintings wouldn't furnish a clue to the motive."

"I don't get you."

"I may be crazy, and they may be dusted well and cared for every day, but I've got a hunch that those aren't the genuine Murillos but some damn clever imitations and——"

"Great Scott! And you think they croaked the old man to steal the real ones?"

"I don't know. I'm not proficient enough to pronounce them genuine or copies; I'm merely playing a hunch. If you think it's worth going after, you're welcome to it. There's no dust on them, but that may mean little or nothing."

Clancy whistled. "I wouldn't give five cents for both of 'em, but—say, if they're as valuable as the girl seemed to think—and somebody wanted them—by gorry! Maybe you've hit on a motive!"

CHAPTER VIII

THE NEXT MORNING

CLANCY attacked his breakfast with the hearty appetite of a man who had gone without a meal and was determined to make up for its loss.

Ward sipped a cup of black coffee but touched nothing else.

It was after eight and the cook, who had been detained outside by the rain, had returned an hour be-

fore, apologetic for her absence, and on the verge of hysterics when she learned what had occurred during the night. She was a loquacious colored woman, by name Celia Clark.

Mrs. Herndon was sleeping peacefully and Margery had not left her room. As the doctor pushed back his chair from the table, the maid Annie passed through with a tray.

"Will you tell Miss Margery I have to go in town in a few moments, and if possible I'd like to see her before I leave."

"Yes, sir."

MARGERY was fully dressed in a straight little black frock when Ward entered her boudoir. She smiled bravely to him in greeting, and he bent over and kissed her.

"I'm going to send a nurse out here for Mrs. Herndon," he said. "She mustn't be left alone. I am going to inform the nurse of her patient's unfortunate habit and see if we can't effect a cure while she is ill. Also, I'll tell the office about your telephone."

"Can you see father's lawyer, Ward, and ask him to come to me at once?"

"Seddon? I intend to."

"Will there be an inquest?"

Ward nodded.

"You'll come back for it?"

"Surely. Margery, when you are a little stronger, I want you to examine those paintings in the library. If you feel as I do, you will have an expert look them over."

"You don't think——?" Her lips parted breathlessly.

"I may be crazy. But there *has* to be a motive for anyone to commit a murder, and if the real Murillos have been stolen that would be a motive, wouldn't it?"

"But would copies be made?"

"I don't know. I don't know that it isn't a wild supposition, but look them over carefully. I'll send Seddon out to you, and see you later in the day. Keep a stiff upper lip, dear, and do just as the nurse tells you, and for God's sake don't let Dolores out of this house."

"What do you mean?"

"Just that. I wont answer for the consequences if she receives another shock. Good-by."

"Would you like Shields to drive you to town?"

"No, the subway is quicker."

POSSIBLY two hours later the nurse arrived, an efficient middle-aged Englishwoman, who had little to say and asked few questions.

During the intervening time there had been no visible change in Dolores. She still slept, and the nurse, who informed Margery that her name was Mary Worth, took her place by the bedside and said she would ring if she desired anything.

Almost simultaneously, a bristly-haired, excited young man drove up to the house accompanied by a portly, slightly bald gentleman, and pushed his way into the hallway without an apology to the butler, whom he shoved unceremoniously aside.

"Marge!" he called from the foot of the stairs. "Marge! It's Jerry! Say, you've had me about crazy not hearing from you!" Then as she appeared in the corridor above, he lowered his voice. "Is it true what the papers say?"

"Yes. I'll be right down, Jerry. Good-morning, Mr. Seddon!"

"Dear, dear! What a misfortune! What a tragedy!" murmured the lawyer, after the girl had repeated in detail all the events of the night. "What a shock to you, and Mrs. Herndon is ill. No wonder, poor woman."

A knowing glance passed from Jerry Lancaster's blue eyes into

Margery's brown ones, but she shook her head to warn him into silence.

She had taken her visitors into the dining-room, by far the most cheerful room in the house, for the windows opened onto a wide sun-parlor and through it to the gardens beyond.

"You might have telephoned me, Margery," Jerry reproached her. "I could have helped you a little."

"The wires were cut," she answered wearily. "I couldn't phone any one."

"Cut?" Seddon paused in his abrupt pacing of the room. "That would indicate some one in the house. Were the servants all questioned?"

"You forget none of them were here except Hayes, and he was shot himself. Shields drove the car into town and didn't return until about one o'clock. Cook was out——" She moved her hand with a little impatient gesture. "They had nothing to do with it, Mr. Seddon."

"I'd like to talk to them, anyway, if you don't mind."

"As you like."

"He's an old fuss budget," Jerry exclaimed when they were left alone. "I got it that you didn't want me to say anything about Ward and your stepmother, so I kept 'mum.' But why shield her?"

"I'm not shielding her, Jerry, but I want you not to mention to any one our conversation of last night. Ward has explained everything, and I'm sorry, terribly sorry, for my suspicions."

"Explained? How explained? We saw them together."

"Yes, I know, but—there was a reason. Just now I'd rather not tell you, but, Jerry, I trust Ward absolutely and when this is all cleared up I'm going to marry him."

"Then that lets me out!" he groaned.

MARGERY gulped and hesitated.

"Dolores needs our friendship, Jerry—more than you realize—and I'm afraid I've prejudiced you against her."

"What a great little scout you are," he said admiringly. "Ward Gresham is one lucky boy."

She watched him as he turned abruptly to cross to the window and look out at the garden. Beyond the arbors, now covered with withered, tangled vines, was the garage. The limousine, used the night before, stood in the driveway, and Shields was playing the hose over it.

"Well," mused the boy, "I'm glad you aren't so up to date that you've given your love to your good-looking chauffeur."

"Why do you say that?"

"Dunno. But he *is* good-looking. Didn't you ever notice it?"

"I don't like him," Margery answered. "I dislike extremely handsome men, especially when they know they are handsome."

"You haven't had him long, have you?"

"Two or three months. Why?"

"Just making conversation."

The man under discussion turned, and for a moment a smile lighted his eyes and flashed very white teeth into play, then he continued with his work. Jerry bowed in return.

"Who engaged him, Margery?"

"Father, I suppose, or maybe Dolores. I was away at the time. As a sleuth, Jerry, you'd be a wretched failure. Shields drove Dolores into town last night, and drove her back, don't forget that."

"Where was he during the time she was at the Cascades with Ward?"

"Near the hotel, unquestionably, waiting for her call."

"Perhaps." He struck a light and casually lit a cigarette.

"And even had it been possible for him to have come back here, Hayes

would have recognized him as the man who shot him, and he didn't. The man was a stranger, some one he had never seen before."

CHAPTER IX

A CALL FROM JERRY

THE inquest and the funeral were over, and, at last, after a week of uncertainty, dread, horror, endless intrusion from reporters, detectives, police officers, the house had quieted down and a certain semblance of routine had routed out the excitement.

During the week Dolores had lain in a semi-coma, rousing from her lethargy occasionally to mutter incoherent phrases in Spanish or to cry out in sudden terror. Once, Margery, seated by her bedside, thought she caught the word Estabán.

Margery was not familiar with Spanish, but the words, jumbled together by her stepmother, were unintelligible. At times she was positive that reason had returned to Dolores, for there seemed to be recognition in the dark eyes that stared into hers, but when she spoke to her, Dolores did not reply, and her expression would become blank again.

There had been no new developments during the week. Nothing had been discovered other than what the police had learned the night of the murder. The verdict had been murder by person or persons unknown. Hayes had stuck to his story and the description of the man who had shot at him.

For some reason, Clancy had thought it best to say nothing to his superior about what Ward had said to him regarding the Murillos and consequently, though the papers had carried headlines daily about the murder, no mention of the paintings or a possible theft of them had been made.

For this both Margery and Ward were grateful, for an expert, after examining them had pronounced them genuine, or if not, copies so good as to be impossible to detect.

Finger-print experts had examined the revolver, but her father's prints were so intermingled with that of another's on the handle that they were of little value. The rain had blotted out any telltale foot-marks on the veranda, and there were none on the carpet of the library floor.

Margery had gone over all of her father's papers page by page. He had left no diary, and had evidently been writing a history of the art of the Renaissance at the time he met his death.

His will had not been read, as she felt that it should not be until her stepmother was in a condition to hear it, though Seddon's attitude led her to believe that the document had little concern with the Spanish woman.

"As a matter of fact, Margery," he had said, "I am afraid there is another shock before you. I'm not at all sure that your father was as rich a man as you thought. Recently he sold some of his property, much against my advice. Of course, he may have invested the money in other holdings, but if so, he told me nothing of it, and I am afraid it has gone for a lot of junk which would be worthless to anyone but a collector."

"I'd hardly call it junk, Mr. Seddon," the girl had answered. Perhaps he banked the money, anyway."

"Let us hope so. When the vault is opened we will be wiser on that score."

HIS remarks had left her vaguely uneasy, and as she wandered restlessly about the house, trying to piece together the patches of the

puzzle, she seemed to find the riddle more hopeless every day.

After all, how little she knew of Dolores Spindola! She had blazed upon the Rialto some nine months before, billed as La Bonita Dolores, premier dancer of Madrid, and if not exactly possessing genius, she had had sufficient talent and unusual beauty to set the jaded pulses of Broadwayites throbbing and to spring into instant acclaim.

One ambitious young reviewer wrote a story in which he compared her features with those af a famous Castilian beauty of the 17th century, Doña Estabán, whose beauty had been perpetuated in oil by Murillo.

Anthony Herndon had read the article, and, because he had recently acquired the painting mentioned, decided to see the woman who was supposed to be its living replica.

He rarely attended the theatre, and Margery had been surprised when he invited her to accompany him to see the Revue at the Amsterdam. Her surprise changed into amusement when he explained the reason for his desire to see the dancer.

He had been strangely overcome when Dolores appeared on the stage, and had murmured aloud several times: "Doña Estabán in the flesh! What a resemblance!"

Whether the dancer had purposely chosen a scarlet mantilla in copy of the painting, or wore it to call attention to the gold of her hair, mattered little, for the young interviewer had written truly—she bore a startling resemblance to the lady of the famous painting.

"I've got to meet her," Herndon had exclaimed, as during a wild outburst of applause the dancer disappeared in the wings.

Margery had followed her father out of the theatre, through a cluttered alley-way to a passage marked "Stage Entrance." Evidently it had not occurred to Herndon that others desired the same privilege and that it was not always easy to gain access to a popular stage favorite, for he fretted and fumed impatiently as they waited outside for some twenty minutes, until the door man returned with the message that Dolores would see them.

A dusky Cuban girl led the way to the dressing-room, but before Herndon could knock, the dancer herself stepped out, and without any perceptible accent, or any embarrassment, greeted them cordially.

The door had been left slightly ajar, and through the crack Margery had seen the lower portion of a man's figure, a pair of tan shoes with cuffs of brown trousers wrinkling over them, and she had heard a low murmur of masculine voices, though she had not distinguished anything that was said.

While her father was expressing his admiration for Dolores' dancing, a man came out of the dressing-room and, flinging a curt adios over his shoulder, wormed his way through the flies and set pieces and left through the stage exit.

Margery had had an unpleasant impression of a dissipated, swarthy person with strongly acquiline features and black hair, before she became aware that her father had invited Dolores to luncheon the following day to see the painting of "herself."

THREE months later Dolores Spindola became Mrs. Anthony Herndon, and it was doubtful to Margery if her father knew any more about her antecedents the day he married her than the night he had forced his acquaintance upon her.

Who the men were who had been in the dressing-room, Margery did not learn, for she never saw them

again. But as she stood at her window, staring across the bare, leafless branches of gaunt denuded trees, the evil face of the man who had passed her that night on the stage of the theatre flashed with amazing clarity across her vision.

She was determined, when Dolores was quite herself again, to ask her who and what the man was. Probably only a reporter, maybe a peddler, but undoubtedly Spanish, and the way he had bade her *adios* had been familiar. If a relative, he must be a disreputable one Dolores did not wish to claim.

"Miss Margery"—Annie stood in the open doorway—"Mr. Lancaster is on the telephone."

"Thanks."

Jerry sounded excited over the wire. "Marge, I want you to come downtown at once, have dinner with me if possible and——"

"Oh, I can't, Jerry. I'm not going out at all now—at least, until Dolores is better."

"I've got something I want to show you. I don't want to talk over the phone, for you can never tell who's listening in. It's important as the devil!"

"You mean it has something to do with father?"

"Yes."

"All right. Where shall I meet you?"

"The Rastor—no, Gorham. Step on it, will you? Make it in an hour. I'd like to have you here before dark."

"Can't you give me any idea what it is, Jerry? I dislike suspense."

"No. Don't raise your hopes, but the thing's rather queer to me."

She hung up the receiver conscious that she was quivering with excitement, and, turning, saw that Shields, the chauffeur, was closing the hall door after him. His step had been so light she had not heard him.

For a second she thought he had been listening, for she detected something besides the usual arrogant, satisfied expression on his face, but instantly the thought vanished.

"Well, Shields?"

"I wanted to inquire how Mrs. Herndon is feeling, Miss Margery," he said apologetically, a manner unusual with him. "Is she still unconscious?"

"Not unconscious exactly, but sometimes scarcely rational."

"You mean delirious?"

"Yes."

His eyes shifted, his lips tightened, then he said quietly: "I'm very sorry to hear it. I hope it isn't anything serious."

"She isn't strong, and the shock unnerved her. I think it will be some little time before she recovers, but there is no danger of her dying, I'm glad to say."

Sudden relief flashed across his face.

"You like Mrs. Herndon?" Margery asked impulsively, touched by his genuine interest and sympathy.

"Yes, ma'am. I like her. I—like her a lot. Some of the servants don't, but she's ace high with me," he smiled wistfully.

"Shields."

Yes, Miss Margery."

"I'm driving into town at once. I want you to take me."

"Yes, ma'am."

CHAPTER X.

THE SPANISH EXHIBITION

JERRY LANCASTER was waiting for her at the corner of Fifty-fifth street and Fifth Avenue, looking about anxiously. As they approached the Gorham Hotel, he swung about and met her directly in front of the entrance.

"Send your chauffeur home," he

said tensely. "I'll drive you back myself."

"I shan't need you again, Shields," Margery said as she stepped from the machine with Jerry's assistance. They stood watching the limousine until it was lost in the up and down traffic.

"Now what is it, Jerry? You're so mysterious you've made me all of a tremble."

"You remember what you told me Ward said about the Murillos?"

"Yes."

"Well, I don't know a thing about paintings, but I've seen those two at your house so many times I'd know them again anywhere. And, Marge, I've just seen them in a show-window three blocks from here."

"Oh, Jerry Lancaster! You dear blunderhead! You got me downtown to see some copies of the originals in our home! How could you?"

"Copies nothing!" he retorted "This man doesn't deal in copies, and he certainly wouldn't tag them as genuine if he didn't think they were. That's why I sent for you. Either these I saw are the genuine or yours are. Come on, I want you to have a look at them."

"But, Jerry, there's some mistake, surely. Did you go in the shop, did you make any inquiries?"

"Sure did. I was just passing along when by merest chance I happened to glance in the window. Those two pictures certainly handed me a wallop. I went in pronto, but the clerk couldn't tell me anything, except that they weren't for sale, and that Mr. Sibley—that's the dealer or exhibitor—wasn't in at present, and wasn't expected back for an hour or so. So I beat it out and phoned you."

He took her arm and piloted her through the crowd. The shop faced a side street with deep windows on either side of the door. In both of these were exhibits of paintings. One window contained several oils of contemporary artists, the other the Madonna and Doña Estabán attributed to Murillo, a Velazquez and a Goya, with a placard that they were the property of Señor Allessandro Estabán and were of the Spanish school of the 16th and 17th centuries.

Margery's hands were icy as they gripped together. She stared with fascination through the window, then into Jerry's clouded face.

"Señor Allessandro Estabán," she said slowly. "Jerry! That picture is called Doña Estabán! It can't be—yet, Jerry, if these are genuine then father's are imitations, and he paid a fortune for forgeries!"

"Or," said the boy dryly, "the originals were stolen from him, and he gave his life in protecting them."

"No! No! If they had been stolen—the thief would *never*, never have exhibited them!"

"Well, maybe Sibley is in now and he can give us some information." He pushed open the revolving door and Margery followed him into the shop.

A BOYISH-FACED clerk who had attended Jerry a short time before came toward them, but, upon recognizing him, said: "Mr. Sibley's here now, if you care to speak to him."

Sibley proved to be an artistic looking man with a well-trimmed Van Dyke beard and a tendency toward flowing cravats. He came from the rear of the room rubbing his hands together and smiling suavely.

"You were inquiring about the Murillos?" he said. "They aren't for sale, you know!"

"They are genuine?" Margery's voice trembled.

He smiled patronizingly. "Oh, absolutely, and very beautiful, don't you think?"

"Are you sure they're genuine?"

Jerry blurted, his wide, good-natured face florid with excitement.

"Why, certainly. My friend Señor Estabán has kindly permitted me to exhibit them for a few days before he returns to Spain. You note the name. The lady of the painting was an ancestor of his, consequently the picture is of more value to him than to another collector."

"But, but——" Margery fumbled helplessly for words; she was stunned, utterly bewildered. "Do you know if Mr. Señor Estabán—has had them in his possession long?"

"Five years ago, when I had the pleasure of first making his acquaintance during a trip to Spain, he showed them to me in the gallery of his *hacienda*."

"Five years ago!" Margery's chin quivered. "Do you mind telling me where?"

"Madrid."

"Madrid! Why, Marge, that was where your father——"

"Yes, yes, Jerry!" she interrupted nervously. "You see, Mr. Sibley, some months ago my father purchased two Murillos in Madrid—the Madonna you have there and the Doña Estabán—and he paid a large sum for them, thinking them the originals."

"How unfortunate," murmured the dealer, "for they must unquestionably be imitations!"

"Father knows art—is—was quite an authority," she stammered, "I can't understand him being deceived. Yet—if you say these are the originals——"

"Where can we find this Mr. Estabán?" Jerry asked bluntly. "He might throw some light on the matter."

Sibley hesitated. "I'm certain these are genuine," he said smugly.

"I'll take your word for it," the young man returned, "but recently Mr. Herndon was murdered, and now the question of the paintings coming up——"

"Herndon! You mean Anthony Herndon?" The smugness dropped from Sibley's manner and instantly he was all interest.

"Yes."

"And you are his daughter?" to Margery.

"Yes. Did you know my father?"

"Yes and no." He stroked his beard reflectively. "That is surely strange. No. I can't say I knew your father, Miss Herndon. I've spoken with him several times in this shop, and we've had some arguments on the merit of various artists but—I'll say this—I would never believe Anthony Herndon could be deceived on an oil, regardless whether I agree with him upon its value or not. How unfortunate he was cut off in such a tragic manner. I've read of his death, of course, in the papers. I sympathize deeply with you, my child."

"Thank you. Will you give us Señor Estabán's address?"

"Lawrence," turning to the young clerk, "will you look up Estabán's number on my files? I have a wretched memory, Miss Herndon; never can remember whether it's 263 or 362 Fifth Avenue. I know Estabán very well, very well indeed, but we aren't close friends. You understand—close acquaintances—but not—oh, here we are. Thank you, Lawrence."

He took the card from the clerk's hand, then laughed apologetically. "I was all wrong about the number. He *did* live at 263. But he has moved; you'll find him at the Maria Louise Hotel, on Broadway, you know, uptown."

"Thank you, Mr. Sibley." Margery offered her hand. "I'm sorry to have bothered you."

"No bother at all, none at all. If I can assist you in any way, you will

please call on me, wont you?" He seemed to have become exceedingly nervous and anxious to have them leave the shop.

JERRY," Margery said when they were on the street again, "I'd like to telephone Ward and have him go with us to see this man."

Jerry's face muscles tensed, then he smiled. "Sure, if you like, or if you'd rather I'd drop you at his office and toddle along, say so."

"Of course not. This is your party as much as mine, and I want you with me. Only you see, Ward knows more about paintings than we do, and it was he who suggested ours might be forgeries. There's a telephone booth in here. I'll call him. He's probably still in his office. I wont be long."

She darted into a cigar store on the corner and entered the booth. She was gone but a moment, but when she returned there was a worried frown on her face.

"He wasn't there," she said in answer to his interrogative glance. "His attendant told me he left about an hour ago to go to Herndon Hall."

"That's strange. Did you know he was coming?"

"No. I wonder if Dolores is worse. Do you suppose I ought to go home, Jerry?"

"No. If he's with her she's all right. I suggest that we pay our call on this Spaniard as soon as possible. Sibley said he was sailing soon, didn't he? And in that case we may miss him. We'll hop in a taxi and go uptown at once."

It was after five o'clock and the uptown jam had begun. Taxis scurried by at an incredible speed. To find a vacant one seemed almost an impossibility.

"Nothing doing here," Jerry said, after motioning in vain to some half dozen cabs whose drivers shook negative heads at him. "Let's try Sixth Avenue."

As they dodged across the avenue an empty machine headed west passed them. Jerry threw out his arm and called: "Hey!"

The driver threw in his brakes so quickly that they ground; then he backed the machine up to the curb. He leaned around from his seat and opened the door.

Margery's hand crushed over her mouth. She had seen that face somewhere. The swarthy skin, inky hair and dissipated features were vaguely familiar. Then in a flash she remembered.

"Maria Louise Hotel," Jerry directed, then looked at his companion in surprise, as she caught feverishly at his arm. "What is it, Hon?"

"Jerry, look at the number of the car when we get out. And don't forget it. That man—I've seen him—and I know—I'm positive he—he—" She hesitated, conscious she was about to betray a secret best untold.

"What about him?"

"I'm just seeing father's murderer in everyone," she stammered with a nervous laugh. But do take his number. It's a hunch, as Ward says—but I'm going to follow it."

After all, if this taxi driver was a relative that Dolores wished to forget and avoid, why should she tell even so old a friend as Jerry of the relationship? And Dolores may only have used him as a chauffeur—just as *she* was doing. Except for the familiarity of that *adios*, she would have been certain of it.

CHAPTER XI

SHIELDS

"ESTABAN. Oh yes, Señor Estabán is stopping here," the clerk at the desk informed them. "But I'm almost positive I saw him

go out of the lobby a short time ago. There's the house phone—you might call his room and make certain." He gave them the number of the suite occupied by the Spaniard.

"Not in," Jerry said after a moment at the receiver. "What do you want to do, Marge, hang around a while and see if he comes in?"

"I'll ask the telephone operator if he left any word when he would return," she replied. "I can't stay here very long; I'm worried about Dolores."

"You sit down here. I'll ask the girl."

She seated herself in a leather chair near the elevator and through force of habit opened the mesh bag she carried and from it took a small vanity case. As she glanced in at her reflection and dusted powder over her nose, she had the sensation of being stared at, as though some one were studying her intently.

She shifted her position with a shrug of impatience and snapped her vanity shut; but as she replaced it in her bag she glanced quickly over her shoulder and smothered the half cry that escaped her lips.

The swarthy taxi driver was standing at the side entrance, his face pressed against the glass of the revolving door, and as she turned, he quickly averted his gaze and moved away.

She was trembling violently when Jerry returned to her side, and she wondered if she should tell him of the incident or remain silent. She decided to do the latter.

"The operator says that Estabán left word he wouldn't be back until late, that he was going to a dinner party and afterward to the theatre," Jerry said gloomily. "We can't wait around for him, so I guess there's nothing to do but put our call off until tomorrow."

"I suppose so." She rose slowly. "I don't think I care to stay down to dinner, Jerry. This has upset me a great deal, and I feel I should be at home. I'd suggest you dining with us—only the house is pretty gloomy."

"It's heaven where you are," he answered.

"Sometimes, Jerry, I believe you're Irish. Do you *want* to come with me?"

"I said I'd drive you home, and the least you could do for a hungry man who sees you safely to your door is to feed him," he bantered. "Unless—Ward might object to my presence."

"Don't be silly. Ward is as fond of you as I am."

"Worse luck."

IT was about four o'clock of the same afternoon that Ward Gresham had received a telephone call from Mary Worth, the nurse he had engaged for Dolores Herndon. She had told him that Mrs. Herndon had become quite rational and now insisted upon dressing and leaving the house and that she, Mary Worth, was finding it difficult to detain her.

The young physician had given orders to keep Dolores in bed at all cost, and had immediately leaped into his machine and driven uptown.

He found a very defiant, if physically weak, woman sitting on the bed facing the nurse.

"I wont be locked in here like a prisoner!" she cried hysterically when she saw Ward. "How dare that woman hold me here against my will? Who is she, anyway?"

"A nurse I have engaged," the physician answered calmly, removing his hat and coat and drawing a chair by her bedside. "You've been very ill, Dolores, and you are ill now."

"I'm not! I've had a shock, but I'm quite myself now. I thought you were my friend. I see now that you

have—have—switched over to her side." Save for a slight tendency to drop her *h's* and a blurring stress on the *r's*, her English was perfect, even in her excitement.

"I *am* your friend," he said quietly, "and I don't understand what you mean by 'switched over to her side.' The nurse is acting under my orders."

Her black eyes snapped. "I don't mean the nurse. I mean Margery. She's behind this. It's she who is keeping me here."

"You're childish. You know as well as I do why you are not going to be permitted to leave this house. You are going to stay here until you are cured. Do you understand? Until you are *cured.*"

His voice was brittle, cold, but he placed a hand in a gesture of sympathy on the white one that quivered against the blue coverlet.

"Cured of what?" she stammered, her eyes widening.

"You understand me perfectly. I've known all along, Dolores, just as your husband did."

A hot wave of crimson stained her skin, and she jerked her hand from under his, passionately.

"And you and he connived together! I thought so! I felt it all along! So that was why you were so attentive to me! To me, when you were sick with love for that—that—bread-and-butter schoolgirl."

"I never said I didn't love Margery," he answered wearily. "I do, and I intend to marry her."

"She'll have nothing, nothing at all. Anthony willed *everything* to me!"

"That matters little. I can support a wife. But whether I love Margery or not, I have been and am your friend—and physician."

She laughed dryly. "Well, you didn't accomplish much, did you?"

"A little."

"What do you mean?" she tensed.

"I found your bottle of morphia and I shall take good care that no more is hidden in the same place."

"No!" she shrilled. "No! You can't take it away from me! Ward! Don't you understand I can't live without it. I'd die! For God's sake, let me have it! Give it back to me! It's a necessity. I'll die without it!"

"I shall give you enough so that you don't suffer," he said grimly. "Lessen the doses as I have this past week, but I'm going to cure you of the habit."

"I don't want to be cured!" she said stubbornly. "I did once, but I don't now. What's the use?

"Use? Good God! Dolores, you are young, beautiful, you've everything in life before you! At least you owe it to the memory of your dead husband to make the effort. He was one of the finest men in the world. Haven't you any respect for his name? Do you know where this will lead you?"

FOR a moment her eyes met his steadily, then the long lashes drooped and she began to sob pitifully, like a hurt child. She dropped back among the pillows, burying her face in them, her shoulders shaking with the paroxysm of grief that swept over her.

"She's all right now," Ward said to the nurse, rising and pushing back the chair; "let her alone for a little while. I'll come back later."

"Shall I keep the door locked?"

"It isn't necessary."

He went out into the garden and wandered aimlessly about the grounds, kicking at dried bits of shrubbery along the driveway.

Following the path toward the garage, he saw that the door of the stone building was open and through it he got a glimpse of a dejected looking figure sitting on a bench. The

man was Shields, and he was hunched forward, his head in his hands, absolutely motionless, as if in deep thought.

He looked up as Ward paused and his ready smile wrinkled the corner of his eyes.

"Trouble?" the physician suggested.

"No, nothing at all," the man answered.

"I take it you aren't always busy."

"No. Not much to do with Mrs. Herndon sick and the old man gone. I don't see why Miss Herndon doesn't fire me. I don't seem to be needed around here."

"Most men like a soft snap."

"I'm not kicking. Only it's lonesome sometimes." He rose from the bench and jerked his leg forward. "It's asleep," he laughed. "Been sitting still too long."

"By the way, Shields, what were you doing the night you drove Mrs. Herndon to the Biltmore; that is, during the time she and I were upstairs, and the hour when you brought us back here?"

"You mean the night of the murder?"

"Yes."

"Why, I went around to Loew's State. Why?"

"I just wondered. You knew she wouldn't need you for some time?"

"She said she wouldn't for a couple of hours. Why?"

"I don't remember her giving you any orders, that's all."

"She told me on the way to town, before she met you."

"Oh! Have a cigar?" He offered a tooled leather case.

"Thanks, don't mind if I do."

WARD watched his hand as it fumbled with the case. It was perfectly steady, and not a nerve quivered when he struck a light and touched it to the cigar. He had slender hands, his fingers tapered, and the nails were well cared for. Not a mechanic's hands at all.

He drew a few puffs on the weed, leaning against the jamb of the garage door; his eyes, now the color of a London fog, with curious yellow flecks in them, were staring across toward the house.

Ward followed his gaze, but saw nothing of any interest. Just a three-story stucco and stone structure, gray and excessively ugly in architecture of no particular period. The thought occurred to him that if Anthony Herndon had lived for the beauty of things to fill its interior he had cared little for the exterior of his home. Paint was badly needed. Vines overran one wall, there was something almost dilapidated about the wide front veranda, for the floor sagged, and in the sun-porch which faced him a small pane of glass was missing.

Curious how a man so fastidious in some matters could be so careless in others.

"You drove Miss Herndon downtown?" he said abruptly.

"Yes, sir."

"Did she say when she would be back?"

"No. She met Mr. Lancaster in front of the Gorham and just said she wouldn't need me any more."

"How long ago was that?"

"About two hours, I should say, anyway. I've been here ten minutes or more."

"She'll probably dine with him, then." Ward moved a trifle, then said as though it was an after thought, "Miss Herndon rarely used you, did she, Shields?"

"No."

"Mrs. Herndon occupied most of your time?"

"Yes, sir. Till this happened."

"You didn't know her before you came here to work, did you?"

An amused glitter flashed in the opaque eyes.

"No, sir, I never knew her. I saw her on the stage once. Why?"

Ward laughed. "I thought you might have been in her employ before her marriage, as you've not been here very long. You don't know any of her friends—acquaintances?"

"Why should I? Is it customary for a servant to know the friends of his mistress?"

"No — only——" The physician snapped his fingers and glanced quickly at the man.

"Doctor Gresham"—the chauffeur tossed away his cigar—"I know what you're driving at. I'd be a fool if I didn't. You're a doctor—and I haven't seen her every day for months without realizing that—that—Mrs. Herndon is a dope fiend. I wish to God you could cure her. I'd—I'd——" He stopped abruptly. "I'd like to be able to tell you where she gets the stuff and help you to put a stop to it, but I can't. I don't know any more about it than you do."

The man's vehemence startled Ward.

"You're fond of her?" he asked quietly.

"Well," defiantly, "a cat can look at a queen, can't it? I guess there's no law against me admiring her. A good many have done so."

"Surely. Surely. Maybe you *can* help me in the future. We'll see, Shields."

A taxi drew up to the gate at that moment and turned into the driveway. Ward swung around abruptly, saw the passengers were Margery and Jerry Lancaster and hastened to meet them.

CHAPTER XII.

AN INTERVIEW

"THEN you don't think Marge should telephone this Spaniard and make an appointment?" Jerry asked from the depths of a leather chair in the library where they had gone after dinner.

"No, I don't think it advisable. Best call on him the first thing in the morning. Of course, Sibley or whatever his name is, may have already gotten in touch with him, but I doubt it."

"But, Ward," Margery interrupted, "the pictures are on exhibition. If there were anything wrong about Señor Estabán he surely wouldn't dare to call attention to them in that manner."

"I know, dear, I know." He nervously ruffled the wave in his hair with one hand. "Probably both the dealer and Estabán are on the level—it's simply a question of who knew more about art, your father or these men. But forewarned is forearmed, you know."

"Damned curious, anyway," muttered Jerry.

"Perhaps we will know something more when father's will is read," mused Margery. "I'm glad Dolores is better. But I'm afraid she will be very upset about it. Mr. Seddon hinted that father hadn't been very generous with her."

Ward looked at her quickly.

"You know its contents?"

"Not exactly. Only he led me to believe that practically everything was left to me. Curious, isn't it?"

"I wonder if Seddon could be reached tonight, and induced to come out," Ward said slowly.

"You mean read the will tonight?" Margery asked.

"Yes. We're groping in the dark when it's unnecessary. The contents

of the will may clear up a lot of things. Seddon knows nothing about the paintings—at least we've said nothing—and there may have been a sale of which he has the record. If there is anything to upset Dolores in the document we'll say nothing to her until she is stronger."

"Of course I shall see that she is provided for," Margery said simply. "Jerry dear, do you mind calling Mr. Seddon?"

After Jerry had left the room the girl in a few brief sentences informed her lover of her experience with the taxi driver, of the way he had stared at her and her certainty that he was the same man she had seen leaving Dolores' dressing-room some months before. Then she handed Ward the slip of paper with the cab number written on it.

"I think you should turn this over to the police," Ward said slowly.

"Oh, Ward, no! If he is some relative of hers it would be terrible to drag him to light and embarrass her."

"You don't want to let anything stand in the way of finding your father's murderer, do you?"

"No."

"I think any clue, regardless how trivial, should be followed up. It may even be necessary to engage private detectives to look into the past life of your stepmother."

"Ward! How terrible! I would never countenance such a step."

"Well, what do you know of her, Margery? She might be an adventuress for all you know. This man you speak of—the drugs. I admit I've seen nothing since I know her that would indicate she is other than a lady but, honey, the fact remains that your father has been murdered, the shock, certainly not grief, overpowered her, and the police have discovered nothing!"

"It's all so horrible, Ward," she sobbed with a little shudder. "The papers have made too much of father's marriage as it is. I don't believe I could stand it if they said any more or if we should discover Dolores isn't all that she should be."

HE put his arm about her, and for a second rested his cheek against her burnished hair.

"I wish you would marry me now, Margery, and let me take care of you. It's too gloomy and bleak for you here, practically alone—worse than alone, for that matter."

"I can't do it, Ward, not until I've discovered who killed daddy."

As he kissed her Jerry came back into the room. They moved apart with an embarrassed laugh, but Jerry announced easily that the lawyer would be out as soon as he could make it.

"And, Margery," he added, "the nurse just asked me if you wouldn't come upstairs. Dolores wants to talk to you."

"Sounds encouraging, Margery," Ward said heartily. "That's the first time she has asked for you, isn't it?"

"Yes. You think I should go to her?"

"By all means."

Margery felt a little uneasy as she mounted the stairs and approached the apartment occupied by Dolores, a trifle nervous over the prospect of an interview alone with her stepmother.

She could not define the reason for the feeling except, perhaps, because Dolores had never asked her into her apartment before.

One might say there had always been an armed neutrality between the two women. At table; when they met in the drawing room on the rare occasions when that ornate and costly chamber had been opened; on the grounds; a few times when they shared the services of Shields in the

car, Dolores had been pleasantly courteous as to a stranger.

But never once had she evidenced any desire to even be on a friendly relationship with her husband's daughter, nor offered her her confidence in any way.

If she broke her wall of silence, now that the only link between them was severed, it would be because of some reason which could only cause Margery more pain.

Dolores was sitting up in the bed. There were several pillows behind her head and her hair hung in a thick plait over one shoulder. She was fully dressed, and the covers had been pushed to the foot of the bed.

Margery crossed to her, saying softly, "I hope you are feeling a great deal better now, Dolores?"

"Thank you, yes. I'm a little weak, otherwise I'm perfectly well. Sit down."

There was a nervous twitching in the muscles of her cheeks and her chin quivered, but she looked at Margery steadily, as though trying to read her thoughts.

"Do you want to talk to me? You're sure it won't tire you?" Margery hesitated.

"Of course it wont tire me," impatiently. "You and that—Doctor Gresham have made a great deal of fuss about nothing. Do sit down. It makes me nervous to have you standing there."

MARGERY seated herself abruptly on a bench near the foot of the bed.

"And leave us, Miss—er—I don't know your name——" to the nurse.

"Worth, Mrs. Herndon," the nurse replied. "I'll be outside the door if you want me."

Margery glanced appealingly at her as the woman crossed to the door, but Mary Worth smiled reassuringly, the smile an admonition to humor the patient.

"Now," Dolores placed her feet on the floor and leaned toward her stepdaughter, "I want you to tell me just what you know about me!"

"Know about *you?*" Margery half rose in amazement at the suddenness of her question.

The other laughed harshly. "Don't pretend innocence. Are you a party to the doctor's scheme to keep me a prisoner?"

"No one is trying to keep you a prisoner, Dolores. But—if you mean about your using the drug—I do know——" She hesitated in embarrassment.

Dolores laughed again. "Drug! So he's told you that lie too! Just as he told my husband! A lie that broke Anthony Herndon's heart and caused him to take his life! Oh, what a terrible thing to do!"

She began to pace the floor, clasping and unclasping her hands together.

"It isn't a lie, Dolores," Margery said calmly, though her heart pounded with quick hammer-like thumps against her breast, "and you know as well as I do that father was murdered! He was aware of your habit, but no matter how much the fact may have hurt him, it certainly would never have caused him to take his own life."

"No? He loved me. He loved me very, very much."

She stopped directly in front of Margery and flung the words at her with a certain defiance.

"I know he did, and that is why I want to help you now. Wont you let me?"

Margery rose and put her hand on the other's arm.

"By keeping me with a jailer to watch every move I make, to spy on every action, listen to everything I say! I wont have it! D'you hear? I wont have it! Do you know what happened today? I was locked in!

Locked in! Was that your idea or *his?*"

"I had nothing to do with it, Dolores, and the nurse is here because you have been very ill. Father engaged Doctor Gresham to help you. As a physician, he—he is doing what he thinks is for your good."

"You think I murdered Anthony Herndon! You think I——"

"Oh, no! No! No! Such a terrible thought never occurred to me. I know better. I saw you that night with Ward!"

"You think I know who did, then!" she continued wildly, pacing about the floor, staggering a little with weakness.

"No, I don't. Dolores, please let us be friends. You're getting excited again. I—I felt very hurt about you and Ward, but I never, even in my thoughts, accused you of anything so horrible as you suggest. Why should I? You had nothing to gain by father's death."

"No?"

The woman whirled, and her eyes, the pupils like pin pricks, flashed into Margery's with an expression that made the girl cringe.

"How do you know I hadn't? Maybe I wanted my freedom! Maybe I loathed this gloomy, bleak, silent old house! Maybe I wanted to get rid of his old, withered hands pawing my body! His cracked, parched old lips on mine! His incessant conversation about Da Vinci and Michael Angelo and Cellini—"

"Dolores!"

"You don't imagine for one moment I *loved* him, do you?"

MARGERY drew back from her, shivering at the passion on her livid face.

"Loved him! Look at me! Then think of what he was!"

"My father was a fine, intellectual, wonderful man!" sobbed the girl hotly, stung to a retort by her stepmother's venom. "Too good for you—you——!"

"Well, he bought me! He paid a high price for me! But, oh my God, I've paid a higher price for his name—his fortune!"

She wilted suddenly onto the bed and began to sob hysterically, rocking backward and forward, wringing her hands.

"I gave up freedom and love for it. Love! And you don't know what that means! Love!"

"You—loved another man when you married my father?" Margery asked slowly, her face drained of all color. She stood leaning against the bedpost staring at the crouching woman.

"Yes."

"Why are you telling me this—the last person in the world you should confess such a thing to?"

"Because I want you to make Ward Gresham send that woman away—make him let me get out of here! I've got to, I've got to see him!" The words were jerked between chattering teeth.

"Your lover?"

"Yes—I've got to see him! I've got to!"

"You think he killed my father!"

"No! No! No!"

"You do! That's why you were so overcome!"

Margery caught the thin shoulders in a feverish grasp, unconscious that her nails cut deep into the flesh.

"It wasn't grief—it wasn't shock—nor the drug—that made you ill! It was fear—fear for that other man!"

"No, no!"

"You're lying! Oh, you are vile! I wonder how my father could have ever married you! I know who the man is. I saw him at the theatre the night we met you. A common, dissipated taxi driver—your kind! You couldn't appreciate a man like father

—you—you——" Words failed her.

Dolores raised her head and looked at her, her face frozen with terror. Her lips moved, but she said nothing.

"Yes. I'll tell Doctor Gresham to let you go," Margery continued hysterically, "and I'll tell the police, too. I'll tell them who this man is! Where to find him. Where to——" She stumbled toward the door, groping with an outstretched hand for the knob.

"Margery!" Dolores caught her hand with a frantic sob. "No!" No! You don't know what you'd be doing! Listen. He never killed your father! For God's sake, listen! He didn't know anything about him, where he was—about my marriage. I haven't seen him—been with him since I was married! I was mad—crazy—when I said those things to you about Anthony. I didn't despise him. I admired him. I was fond of him—oh, I was. Not loved him, no, but I was faithful always. Let me tell you. Listen to me!"

WELL?" Margery leaned against the door, controlling herself with an effort as she looked down at the woman now huddled at her feet.

"I loved this—other man—oh, ever since I was a very, very young girl, since I first came to this country. I was born in Spain, yes, but my mother was English—and I've lived here always; but that was not best to be known when I was on the stage.

"He was poor—but that didn't matter. A garret, a crust with him—but the war took him away. I suffered. I was in hell. Always the fear—the suspense. I couldn't eat or sleep. I became ill. I wasn't famous—then—just a poor ballet girl, one—no one noticed!

"It was then I first took it, the morphine—yes—I'm an addict—I wont deny it—to forget. Then, when nothing mattered, a manager saw me—saw that I had unusual beauty—perhaps a future. He spent a fortune on advertising. Put me in a Broadway revue and overnight I became La Bonita. Money—newspaper fame came just when I learned my—lover was dead!"

"Dead! But you said——" Margery gasped incredulously.

"I know, I know. Wait—nothing counted. I was a mad woman. Drugged with excitement, grief and—a husk dead inside but suffering horribly always. Nightmares, hours without sleep, pacing—pacing like a tigress, grasping at anything for relief. Then your father came. I hated the stage—I hated everything that reminded me of *him*.

"Your father offered me a home—a name. I told him I loved another, would always love him—could give him nothing—no affection—no love. He bought me—just what I had to give—a shell of a woman—flesh—bone—yellow hair—no soul—no fire. I married him. Then"—she shivered convulsively—"I learned my lover was not dead."

"Dolores!"

"Wounded—a prisoner—months—returned a wreck—no way to find me—that's all."

She sank back upon the floor, spent in her outburst.

There was silence in the room, silence so thick that the tick of the little blue enameled clock on the dressing-table sounded like the popping of a cork.

Margery, drooping against the door, did not move. She wanted to believe her stepmother's story; she wanted to pity her, to offer her compassion. The abject attitude of the slender body huddled before her, the tormented eyes, quivering mouth, all begged for it. But the girl felt hard, bitter.

Perhaps Dolores had told the

truth. Margery had known a young woman could not truly have loved a man so many years her senior. Perhaps Anthony Herndon had been willing to accept her without love—men had bought beauty before and paid high for doing so—but the recital of a passion that had made her a slave to an insidious drug revolted the girl.

The fact that Dolores had never made an attempt after her marriage to communicate with the man whom she had loved so intensely seemed incredible, not in keeping with an otherwise weak character, a character that had taken to morphine as a surcease from pain.

"I'm sorry!" She choked over the insincerity of the expression, yet feeling she had to say something. "You've suffered—I—know."

Dolores bowed her head.

"But if you have never been in communication with this man, how did you learn that the report of his death was false?"

"Enrico told me, Enrico Cortez—the Cuban you saw at the theatre."

"Then *he* — wasn't — isn't your lover?"

DOLORES' lips curled scornfully. "Certainly not. He's a taxi driver I employ at times. He knew Jimmie before he went away."

"Jimmie? Your lover wasn't a Spaniard?"

"No. American. That's why he fought."

"If you truly love him and he is worthy of your love," Margery said slowly, "you will try to pull yourself together and be thankful to Doctor Gresham for his attempt to cure you of a loáthesome—disease. You can't offer yourself—as you are now—to anyone."

Despite herself the girl's voice was cold.

"But I want to see him—just once—and I'll do anything, anything in the world you ask of me!" Dolores cried pitifully. "It's been so long—and—I need him, Margery. Please—please wont you help me?"

"I'll tell Doctor Gresham what you have told me. You could send for—this—man to come here."

"No—not here," violently.

"Why not?"

"He'd despise me, if he saw me here. I want to go to him, just once. I promise not to see him again—until it's respectful to your father's memory," she smiled wistfully. "I'll be a decent widow."

Margery trembled. "I'll speak to Ward. Now shan't I send the nurse to you?"

"You'll speak to him now—tonight?"

"Yes."

Margery opened the door, then she turned uncertainly.

"Dolores, are you strong enough to hear father's will read? Mr. Seddon is coming here tonight."

A strange expression flickered across the beautiful features.

"I'm strong enough to hear anything read," she answered slowly.

Margery's knees quivered under her as she moved down the stairway; her cheeks burned and her heart throbs sickened her.

Yes, Ward must be induced to release her stepmother from the nurse's surveillance, but also his suggestion that detectives be engaged to look into her past should be followed.

The taxi driver—what was his name, Enrico Cortez?—only a man whom Dolores had used as a chauffeur!

A tense white line settled about Margery's soft lips. Perhaps! What a tangled twisted skein the old sordid mystery was becoming!

(*To Be Concluded.*)

The Adventure of Adventures

By DALE COLLINS

Another PETER LAMB *Story*

THE beauty of Jeanne Lys was not to be questioned, but a more experienced judge of character than little Mr. Lamb might have doubted whether the loveliness of her soul matched her outer seeming, or, indeed, might have ventured the opinion that nobody with such a face and such a figure could be trusted with (a) one's confidence, (b) one's reputation, or (c) one's cash.

The deliciousness of Mrs. Lys was a danger-signal, save in those happy —if to be repented—moments when senses triumph over sense. She had long, green eyes beneath arched brows, a mouth ripe and wistful, a cloud of hair, an oval, olive face and the figure of Aphrodite.

When it is added that her moods inclined to the pensive and enigmatic and that she dressed delightfully, the discerning will appreciate without details of her history that she was an Adventuress.

Little Mr. Lamb, however, had explained to her that she was an angel fairer than any he had ever seen in stained glass. Nothing else could have been expected of him.

He was a prosaic, small soul in quest of Romance, and Jeanne Lys was Romance in its most marketable form. A ship had brought them to Rangoon together, and thus the gods of environment fought against Mr. Lamb and on the side of his wicked goddess.

The small traveler was bewildered by the glamor and color all about him, and when he peeped into Jeanne Lys' eyes he found mirrored therein, he confessed clumsily, the very soul of this strange, fascinating and incomprehensible East.

Jeanne encouraged him to read further. It was a shame to do it, she confessed to herself, but after all, girls must live.

THE car stole along a perfect piece of road. Above, the stars were caught in the palm fronds. The air was warm and heavy. They were alone in the scented night, for the boy at the wheel seemed to be no more than part of the machine.

The hour was one in which the faintest heart might grow bold and the mildest man become Don Juan. Mr. Lamb, if not the complete Don Juan, was making clumsy and bashful attempts to express the riot of emotion which erupted beneath his neat white coat.

"'To think," he said, "that it is only three days since I met you on the boat from Singapore. I feel as if I had known you—and this is the truth, dear, dear lady—for years and years."

"Yes, Peter," breathed Jeanne, "*I* know!"

She spoke very softly, and was silent again. On such a night silences were becoming; Jeanne was always artistic.

To their ears from the far distance came the silvery, faint tinkle of bells. Mr. Lamb drew a deep breath of simple joy.

"'Put me somewhere East of Suez. . . .'" he sighed.

"Peter!" Her hand rested lightly upon his, and for all the tropical warmth her fingers were cool as marble.

"'And the tinkling temple bells,'" murmured Mr. Lamb, swept out of his humdrum self-restraint by many things.

She pressed his hand now, eloquently. Mr. Lamb drew closer.

"You love Kipling, too?" she said, and another bond was established between them—an intellectual bond, which, as all lovers know, is a necessary ingredient in the mixture. It has a justifying, purifying effect. Passion is not enough.

Mr. Lamb, in his shy way, expounded the point.

"We are in the hands of Fate," he said.

"You are right," Jeanne Lys confessed, and she smiled her quiet smile in the darkness, because it was extraordinary the way men discovered that they were in the hands of Fate and really could not be held responsible for what happened—when they were in her company and she found the game worth the candle. Jeanne could not remember a man who had not embraced Fatalism when she wished him to do so.

"But," she added gently, "this is dangerous talk. Remember we are both married."

"Married, yes," agreed Mr. Lamb, and grew thoughtful.

Jeanne was not troubled about his thoughts; they could only be concerned with justifying this sweet business in which Fate had involved them. She little guessed that Mr. Lamb was troubled because he had lied to her, and this oversight was natural because nobody could have suspected Mr. Lamb of telling lies.

And yet the fact was, of course, that Mr. Lamb was single. He soothed his conscience by the thought that it was a white lie, invented to make her feel more at home.

It would be so much easier for Jeanne if they could be married folk together, temporarily parted from their mates. Innocent little Mr. Lamb seemed to feel that this made the proceedings more respectable.

FROM this train of thought he spoke in his ingenuous fashion.

"I am very happily married," he said. "I am rich, but my wife is my greatest wealth."

"A good wife always is," Jeanne admitted soothingly. "What a pity her illness prevented her coming with you to the East."

"Yes," agreed Mr. Lamb, though now that he had paid tribute to the absent one he seemed less emphatic, and, obviously, his mind was wandering to matters closer at hand.

"But no!" Jeanne burst out suddenly. "I did not mean what I said just now—I was fibbing, trying to be polite. I'm glad she is not with you, for if she had been we might never have met. We could never have been—friends."

"True," cried Mr. Lamb with emotion. "I am glad! glad! glad!"

He checked himself. "Oh, why do I say these things to you, Jeanne?" he demanded of the ghost of beauty by his side. "It's something magical in you and in the East and in everything—it's——"

He could not go on; could not explain.

"We are in the hands of Fate," Jeanne reminded him. "And you are

happily married. How I envy you—ah, how I envy you! *He*, as I have told you, is a rogue, a brute, a scoundrel, a beast ——!" She broke off, her hands clenched.

"It is always so," said Mr. Lamb wisely. "The pearl and the swine——!"

"I have been lonely—so very lonely. Now that we have met I feel as if I had been waiting for you through the years!"

"Don't, Jeanne," pleaded little Mr. Lamb, who for all his mildness was not a moral Samson.

"Kismet!" breathed Mrs. Lys.

"Kismet," echoed Mr. Lamb. It was Fate. The latest convert was won.

Eloquence descended upon him suddenly; love gave him the gift of tongues. The reassuring syllables of the word Kismet echoed through his mind.

"There's nothing sordid in this, nothing of a mere flirtation in this. Heaven knows I'd never descend to an ordinary *affaire* even as it knows you would not—but this—this is something greater and finer."

"It always is!" mused Jeanne Lys.

"It is a little Eastern dream on the hard, long road of life. We cannot help ourselves. The East has trapped us—for a little while, just for a day, a week, a moon——!" He held out his arms to her in fervent invitation. "It is——"

"——Fate," whispered Jeanne Lys and crept into his embrace, where she lay still and cool and sweet as a water-lily plucked from some dim pool in an old and ruined temple haunted by the ghosts of gods.

They kissed.

"Poor little boob!" mused Jeanne Lys dispassionately—her lips were consuming the supply of passion available at the moment. "But a girl must live!"

The intelligent reader will perceive that little Mr. Lamb was in a bed of roses entirely surrounded by asps, adders and other threats to his health and well-being.

But he was quite blind to these perils, for in addition to the innocence of his nature he was further handicaped by the fact that he had taken off his pince-nez and put them away. This is a bad sign in these circumstances, and a rash and dangerous step for such simple souls as little Mr. Lamb.

THE bluff, broad-shouldered man, whose name was Dancey and who was a commercial traveler, greeted little Mr. Lamb with a pleased twinkle in his hard blue eyes. They had been fellow-travelers on the ship which had brought Mr. Lamb to Burma and Romance, and, though they had little in common, had been drawn together in a casual way.

Dancey shook a large and reproving finger at Mr. Lamb, and he also chuckled.

"My good Lamb," he said, and chuckled again as he spoke that name which was so richly appropriate, "I believe you're a lady killer after all!"

"Not at all! Not at all!" Mr. Lamb protested modestly, but there was a flush of pleasure in his cheeks, for the less warranted this charge is, the more it is appreciated.

"No use denying it," said Dancey. "You're getting on far too well with the lovely Mrs. Lys for this to be a novice effort. You were motoring with her again last night, eh?"

Mr. Lamb's honesty prevented him denying this impeachment.

"It was a beautiful evening," he pointed out in apology.

"I don't know what to make of you, Lamb," the other confessed, studying the mild blue eyes behind the pince-nez. "You're a bit of a puzzle in many ways!"

"Dear me, no, Dancey," said little Mr. Lamb. "I am merely a simple

soul—that is why you can't quite make me out, as one might say. There are so few simple souls about in these days, don't you think?"

"That's right enough," the other agreed.

He made ready to go upon his way, for he was a busy man and Mr. Lamb was no more than a ship-board acquaintance.

"And when do you think——?" he asked, as they shook hands.

"Tonight," Mr. Lamb answered, and for a second he looked unhappy. "Oh, yes, tonight."

"Splendid," said Dancey. "But you mustn't blow cold on it, you know." He sighed enviously. "What it is to look innocent and gentle! I shouldn't have had a chance. Ah, well, it's a hard world for people with hard faces whom nobody will trust. Best of luck, Lamb, old son. I must be off."

Mr. Lamb made his polite little bow of adieu, and they went their ways, well pleased with each other, themselves and the state of affairs.

THE radiant Jeanne Lys drifted into the post-office that same morning. Her business was to send a telegram, which could have been dispatched from the hotel, but which, for her own good reasons she preferred should not be inspected by more eyes than was absolutely necessary.

Yet it was a simple and innocuous message addressed to a gentleman whose temporary name was Jones and who was in temporary residence at a quiet village up the river.

"Tonight," said the telegram, and that was all.

There was no sense in wasting money on elaborate phrases. Business was business.

Little Mr. Lamb, on inquiring for his lady at the hotel office, was informed that she was out. He was saddened at this news and wondered where she might be, though he knew nothing whatever about the gentleman named Jones.

THEY dined and wined together, and there was music from a stringed orchestra in the air and the sweeter music of Jeanne Lys' slow, quiet laughter.

Little Mr. Lamb looked like a boy made-up as a middle-aged man, and a certain note of devilry in his manner as he sipped his champagne helped the suggestion. The wine was not wasted upon him, for obviously he was not accustomed to such gay proceedings. It is idle, however, to blame the wine for what followed.

They drove together in the same large car, and their progress was like drifting through the air in dreams. A later start gave them the magnificence of the moon, which sailed above the palms touching all things with new beauty.

The eyes of Jeanne Lys were brighter than the moonbeams and her voice was softer than the breathing of the breeze. The night, in truth, was beyond all other nights, but it would be vain to insist that the night was to blame for what followed.

The blame must be shared in equal parts between Jeanne Lys and little Mr. Lamb, two weak and erring mortals who strayed from the path of righteousness, the one from experience and the other—who could think otherwise?—from sheer lack of that invaluable aid to travelers.

"I don't think I shall be able to sleep tonight," said Jeanne in a small, hushed voice. "No, I don't think so."

She looked dreamily into the moonlight. "My room number is 83."

"I am sorry to hear that, dear, dear lady," said little Mr. Lamb, his mouth absurdly close to her ear.

"Sorry to hear my room number?" asked Jeanne.

She was a trifle peeved and with justification, but she concealed the fact, because she was not one who talked merely for the sake of making entertaining conversation.

"No! No!" Mr. Lamb hastened to explain. "I am sorry—terribly sorry—to learn that you may not be able to sleep."

The very bewitching lady in his arm stifled a groan. The result was something which resembled a lover's sigh. The sound was sweet to Mr. Lamb's ears.

How was he to know that it arose from the boredom of an artist who had to debase her art by descending to bludgeon strokes when she knew all the subtleties?

"Suppose you came along quietly and talk to me for a while?"

"Oh, I daren't!" gasped little Mr. Lamb, and his mild eyes grew round with doubt and desire.

"There would be no harm in it," averred his lady. "I don't believe you care whether I can sleep or not!"

"But I do!" Mr. Lamb protested ardently.

"Then surely you will come. We understand each other; we are affinities—it is Fate!"

"Kismet!" said little Mr. Lamb breathlessly.

Jeanne Lys felt his heart beating unsteadily beneath his coat.

"Oh, hell," she meditated, "this is a hard life. I think I'd better marry and settle down. It's hopeless for business when one gets sentimental!"

THE room was dim and cool. There was a pool of moonlight on the floor, but it only served to emphasize the gloom. The tips of two cigarettes glowed. They were close together. The noisy town was lulled in sleep.

Little Mr. Lamb's voice ceased to murmur, and a wicked quiet descended upon the place. Neither Mr. Lamb nor Mrs. Lys were sleeping, however. They were both wide awake and both very busy with their thoughts.

The thoughts, it must be admitted, were not those for which the evil-minded would have hoped. Their thoughts, accordingly, need not be set down here since they are of no interest to the general reader, and, also, were interrupted—interrupted devastatingly, abruptly and completely.

A sharp click was the only warning. Simultaneously a brightness fiercer than the day's flooded the room—or so it must have seemed to the guilty discovered—though all that happened was that the electric light had been switched on.

The event was startling, but it was only the prelude to an amazing and painful scene.

A large, red-faced man wearing a black beard and a travel-stained suit stood in the room. He held a revolver.

"Ha!" said he, and the exclamation had an angry and threatening sound in which was mingled wicked glee. It was a very eloquent monosyllable.

"*You*——!" cried Jeanne Lys with equal brevity and equal depth of feeling.

"Dear me——!" gasped Mr. Lamb, and perhaps his was the most expressive speech of all.

It was evident that the revolver was no ordinary part of the large man's attire, but had been added with a deliberate and savage purpose. There could be little doubt, further, that Mr. Lamb was intended to observe the revolver.

The stranger held it out, pointing it directly at Mr. Lamb in such a manner that even without his pince-nez that gentleman could hardly help observing it.

"Don't—don't fire!" cried Jeanne Lys, shuddering, and flung herself into little Mr. Lamb's no longer willing arms, shielding him from death.

The large man snorted, but not playfully.

FATE had altered the circumstances of the case. The presence of the beauteous Jeanne upon his knee seemed to have lost all its charm for little Mr. Lamb.

He sat rigid, and his small, frightened face peered round the perfect shoulder of the lady, with no eyes for anything save the menacing barrel of the gun. Jeanne stared at the gun, also, sitting there on her lover's knee, her arms upon the chair on either side, protectively.

"What are you doing here?" she demanded, the words trembling on her lips.

"What are you?" asked the large man.

"I didn't know you were within a thousand miles."

The unpleasant visitor nodded.

"So I gather!" he remarked. He seemed to be enjoying himself.

Mr. Lamb, discovering that he was still alive, moved a little and wiped his mouth like one who thirsted.

"Really——!" he began in hesitating protest, making a desperate show of firmness.

"Be quiet," whispered Jeanne Lys, turning her horror-stricken eyes upon him. "Don't make it any worse. Don't you understand—this is my husband. God, we were crazy!"

Mr. Lamb seemed to agree heartily with her last sentiment. They began to hoard syllables again.

"Oh!" choked Mr. Lamb.

"Ah——!" said Jeanne Lys, tearfully.

"Well——?" asked Mr. Lys.

Mr. Lamb perspired. There was a pause—one of those painful pauses when there seems nothing to say or do.

"Get up, you," the most unwelcome husband ordered.

Jeanne Lys obeyed, hastily, in the manner of one who has learned by bitter experience the lesson of obedience. Her dread communicated itself to little Mr. Lamb, intensifying his emotion and increasing his flow of perspiration.

He began to fumble for his glasses in a helpless way, and across his face flashed the alarming memory of the details which Jeanne had supplied of the criminal instincts of her husband.

"Jim! Jim! Don't—you mustn't hurt him!" she panted, and, with something almost animal in her humility and terror, sprang across the room and fell on her knees before her lord and master.

He looked at her coldly, but only for a second, for Mr. Lamb was his chief interest.

"Be quiet, you," he snapped. "I'm going to talk to your lover. You don't come into this—not yet. I want to tell this little, wife-squealing cad just what I think of him."

Jeanne clung piteously to his knees, but Mr. Lys paid no attention to her.

"Now," said Mr. Lys, "what do you intend to do about this? I'm a desperate man—I'm down and out—but at least I still have my wife—or had, until you, with your money, came along and dazzled her!"

"Really," said Mr. Lamb, hoarsely but modestly, "I am far from dazzling."

"But your money's not so far from being dazzling," Lys pointed out.

He seemed to be leading up to something, although his anger was growing so that it showed signs of mastering his self-control before he could make his point. With the instinct born of desperation, however, Mr. Lamb seemed to detect that there was a gleam of hope for him and that a way would be shown by which he might escape from this predicament. He sat forward, eagerly, ready to agree to anything.

BUT at this interesting stage another interruption occurred.

The room was built upon the plan favored in many Eastern hotels. It had doors on either side opening onto verandas. From the door behind Mr. Lys two thin, duck-clad gentlemen sprang and pinned his arms to his sides.

One of these gentlemen did something peculiar to Mr. Lys' wrist and the revolver fell from his fingers. The gentleman was clever and quick. Still holding Mr. Lys with one hand, he caught the revolver with the other ere it reached the floor. He seemed to have practiced the trick in his spare time.

Mr. Lys swore and wrenched, Mrs. Lys fell back on her knees and screamed in very genuine dismay, and Mr. Lamb sat in his chair and mopped his brow. While these things were proceeding, another gentleman appeared in the doorway facing Mr. Lys.

He held a revolver, and Mr. Lys experienced the emotions which had been Mr. Lamb's a minute before. The rigidity of muscle and the moisture of brow became marked features of his appearance.

"Don't move," the latest arrival advised. "I don't intend to let you get away this time, Herbert, old boy. I want you, Herbert Hibbs, for murder *and* blackmail. You know the details. The murder of John Anderson at Bombay on the 20th of August. The blackmail doesn't matter so much. No use sending a man to jail, as well as hanging him. I want you, too, Isabelle, but they won't hang you."

"I should hope not!" said little Mr. Lamb with warmth.

This was natural enough, because Isabelle (alias Jeanne) made a beautiful picture of sorrow kneeling there in the middle of the floor with her lovely eyes fixed on her captor. She looked like a wounded gazelle.

"By hell," cried Hibbs, "this is a trap!"

The statement was made as if it were a great discovery, but the stranger smiled because the fact had been obvious to him for a week or so.

"You a police spy!" gasped Jeanne at Mr. Lamb, not in reproach so much as in utter and incredulous astonishment.

"Not at all! Not at all!" murmured Mr. Lamb.

"No such luck," said the detective. "We can't get 'em like this gentleman. You'd have smelled a rat right away if he'd been one of our chaps. He's merely an honest citizen whom I met by chance.

"I was following you, Isabelle, because I knew you'd lead me to Herbert in due course. I thought a bit of bait might quicken things up and bring the bird I really wanted out of hiding.

"I knew you wouldn't be able to resist a mark for blackmail, particularly when you were rather hard-up. You were after Mr. Lamb even before I got the great idea—weren't you, Isabelle?"

He nodded to his assistants. "All right," he said, and there was a musical clinking as they produced the bracelets specially designed for the wrists of evil-doers.

Detective Dancey, smiling amiably, turned to Mr. Lamb when the task was completed.

"I must thank you, Lamb," said he. "You've been the means of cutting short the careers of two of the biggest blackguards in the East. Anderson, as I tell you, was murdered in cold blood because he threatened to go to the police after he'd been blackmailed for years. All decent citizens in these parts are in your debt. You played your part splendidly."

"Not at all," said Mr. Lamb with his Old-World bow. "I only had to be

myself. I take no credit. It comes natural to me to be a lamb. In any case, the lady was so accomplished that——"

He completed the sentence by bowing again, on this occasion to the bewitching Jeanne.

The compliment was wasted. The art of courtesy is seldom appreciated in these harsh modern days.

LATER in the privacy of his own room, where he seemed much more at ease and in his proper surroundings, little Mr. Lamb spoke to his own reflection in the glass.

"You—a police agent!" he murmured reproachfully, and shook his head at himself. His reflection shook its head, reproaching him for the reproach.

"No," little Mr. Lamb was forced to admit, "perhaps you're right. Somehow I've always had a distaste for murder and blackmail. They're the kind of things nice people don't do!"

From force of habit he took out his little black book.

"There is no profit in this matter," he said regretfully, closing it again. His face brightened suddenly.

"That is nothing that a gentleman could put in writing," he remarked. "How like angels sinful women can be!"

The Magic Summons

An officer in the Indian army while on leave in England married, and took his wife back to India with him.

On arriving at their up-country bungalow she was charmed with everything but one. Outside of the compound or garden sat a repulsive old beggar who gave her a malicious look, and she could not help showing her dislike.

She asked her husband to have him sent away but he said the beggar was harmless and to dismiss him would cause trouble as the natives looked up on him as a wise man.

She developed a great desire to visit the native quarter, but her husband would not hear of this. One day, in the absence of the Captain the old fakir appeared at the door and would not go away. At last he said he would, if she gave him a few hairs from her head.

In a panic of fear, and fascinated by his glance she agreed, but going inside something within her prompted a ruse. From a Chinese mat woven of hair she cut some hairs which she gave the fakir, and he departed. She told her husband and he approved of this.

One night, some time later, they were alarmed to hear a strange flopping in a room overhead, and the sound of something coming downstairs still with the same odd sound.

The Captain snatched his revolver and going into the hall fired thrice at some dimly seen object which passed out of the door and into the garden.

At the shots servants ran out with lights, and there to their horror, perceived the Chinese mat crossing the compound without human agency, flopping and writhing. But for the ruse of the Captain's wife, she and not the mat would have responded to the magic summons to the native quarter.

Gold

By NEIL MORAN

NOBODY in Medville knew that Jud Harrows had a secret, so nobody in Medville knew that he had buried gold. He had been away from Medville for ten years following the sea and the day he returned there were those in the town who didn't recognize him. And though there were those who remembered Jud, it is doubtful if any of them were glad to see him.

They recalled that as a boy Jud had been brutal. He was known once to have squeezed a little bird in his hand. Other children were horrified at the sight of a dead bird falling to the ground. But Jud Harrows only cackled.

There were so many indications along this line that when Jud left the town everybody seemed glad to be rid of him. Even his Uncle Henry, his only living relative, expressed no regret. And now Jud had returned home because he had learned that Uncle Henry had died.

Jud Harrows came into possession of Uncle Henry's farm. On the day he took possession of it, he took no pains to conceal from his late uncle's lawyer that he was disappointed. For Uncle Henry hadn't left him any money.

"Hell!" he said. "What good is a farm?"

"It's for you to work," the lawyer told him. "All your uncle's money is tied up in this farm, Jud, and if you go about it right you can reap a profit."

Jud wasn't much interested in the farm, but he was in the bag that he had carried with him from the station. It was a black bag and contained gold. He opened it and dumped out a number of gold pieces, some larger than others and some older. There was a story connected with that gold and Jud Harrows decided to lose no time in burying it. He would bury it on his farm where he could always get it and where, he believed, it would be safer than if he kept it in the farmhouse.

Now as he thought of how it came into his possession, he shuddered. He sat down and reviewed the events that were connected with the murder.

IN a far-off port, he had manifested friendship toward a man who was one of the few people who had ever liked Jud Harrows. He had manifested friendship for a reason. And then at the first opportune moment he had struck.

The police were baffled over the murder and Jud Harrows was on his way. But he didn't dare spend any of his ill-gotten gains. A rumor came to him that the police knew that the old sea captain had had a bag of gold.

It was shortly after this that Jud Harrows, wandering from port to port, weighed down by his gold but loath to part with it, learned that his uncle had died.

It was time to go back to Medville, and it was more than time to bury the gold. His mind deranged, bordering on the verge of insanity, he developed the notion that all he wanted to do with the gold was to keep it,

bury it, dig it up and feel that he still had it.

Once a week, sometimes twice, he would go down to the spot on the farm where he had buried the gold, dig it up and return with it to the farmhouse. Then, after locking the door, and the windows, and drawing the shades, he would dump the gold out on a crude table and paw over it.

He was engaged in this sometimes for hours. And after he had satisfied this desire, he would return the gold to a bag, take it down to the farm and bury it.

He might just as well have sold the farm for all the good it was doing him. He was allowing it to run down. One day Silas Flint, an old native who had known his uncle, dropped over and told him that the farm was "going to the dogs."

"You ought to work it, Jud," he said. "Why don't you let me help you?"

"You get out!" said Jud suddenly. "I won't have anyone pokin' his nose in here and telling me what to do."

Silas went and reported that incident to the townspeople.

"He ain't doin' no work at all," said Silas. "Just foolin' around. Ain't tendin' to crops or nothin' and the man is out of his mind."

"Maybe he is," said one of the villagers. "He's just crazy. There ain't a doubt of it. Better let him alone."

It was several weeks after this that Jud considered selling the farm. Maybe if he could realize enough money on it, he could take a trip around the world. Perhaps he could live in comfort. But what would he do with the gold?

At the thought, the urge came upon him to handle it. He went down to the farm, dug, and brought the gold back to the house. Then followed the usual performance of locking the door and drawing the shades. And for an hour he sat allowing the gold to slip through his fingers, picking it up and gloating over it.

THE following day, he walked over to Silas Flint's house. The old native, seeing him coming, hurried in the house.

But Jud, while he was aware of the movement, didn't stop until he reached Silas' porch. Then he rapped on the door and told Silas to come out.

"What fur?" asked Silas, looking out the window.

"I want to talk business," said Jud, grinning. "Do you want to buy my farm?"

Silas came and he thought he saw a chance to dicker.

"Maybe," he said. "How much do you want for it?"

Jud told him and Silas shook his head.

"Sit down," he said. "You're crazy! That figure's way too high."

"I'm crazy, eh?" said Jud, misconstruing what was intended. Without thinking, Silas made that remark. But its effect on Jud Harrows was to send him into a tantrum.

He let out a volley of oaths and strode down the steps, shaking his fist at the bewildered man.

Sheriff Benton was passing and he stopped.

"What's the matter, Jud?" he called from his roadster.

"That there feller," said Jud, "said that I'm crazy. I'll get even for this."

The sheriff shook his head and departed and Silas went back into the house scratching his head.

The gold he had buried had become Jud's occupation in life. He devoted more time to it. The desire to handle it he now satisfied daily. Sometimes in the night he would go down to the farm, procure his treasure and carry it back to the farmhouse. Then for an hour or two he would gloat over it. Clink! Clink! It fell on the crude wooden table. Fascinated, Jud would

stare at it. Then the march back to the spot to bury it. The procedure had become almost mechanical.

On a night three weeks after his quarrel with Silas Flint, Jud felt that irresistible desire to handle those gold pieces. It was half-past nine and he decided to go down and get them. He took a box of matches, an old lantern, and started down the farm. He knew just about the spot where the gold was hidden and could even find it in the dark.

He stopped suddenly and lighted the lantern. Yes, he had paused within a foot of the spot. He took the spade and began digging. As he threw up clods of dirt, a curious man on the road got out of his car. He had seen a light on Jud Harrows' farm. The light was on the ground and as he drew near he made out the figure of a man who was bent over.

Digging, Jud Harrows' spade had struck something that he was trying to bring up. It was no dirt. He leaned over suddenly and drew back horrified. What his spade had touched was the arm of a man!

Horror-stricken, Jud Harrows removed more soil and looked into the white face of Silas Flint. Dead, Silas had been buried on the farm. And the gold was gone!

As he drew back the spade, Jud Harrows felt a hand on his arm and turned. Sheriff Benton was watching him.

"Jud," he said, "will you go quietly? I guess you carried out your threat. But I never dreamed when I saw that light that——"

"I didn't kill him!" Jud screamed. "I tell you I didn't kill him! I was digging for gold!

"Crazy!" the sheriff thought, nodding. "Not a doubt!"

THE trial of Jud Harrows for the murder of Silas Flint was the first of its kind in that part of the county. Of the twelve good men and true who sat in the jury box to judge, there was one whose name was Lemuel Tent. He was juror number six and during the trial he sat and looked at Jud Harrows with narrowed eyes.

The evidence introduced seemed sufficient to convict the defendant. Jud protested his innocence and reiterated his story that he was digging for gold.

"What do you mean you were digging for gold?" the prosecutor asked.

"I was digging," said Jud, who was defended by counsel, a boyish attorney who believed he had a hopeless case.

"I object to that question," said the young lawyer, rising.

"Overruled," said the Court, who had no doubt that Jud was insane.

"What do you mean?" asked the prosecutor.

Jud turned to his counsel, who, believing that the case was hopeless, relied on the insanity defense. He hoped to get Jud off, off somewhere where he could be confined in an institution. But outside of that there was no doubt in his mind and none in the minds of the others that Jud had committed the murder.

"Answer the question," said the Court, as Jud continued to stare with his mouth opened.

"Your Honor," said the prosecutor, "we've gone over all of this. The defendant simply comes back with the statement that he was digging for gold. We've asked him time and again what he meant by saying that he was digging for gold and all he said was that he was digging for gold. Now, if it pleases your Honor, I think we are wasting time. We have shown that this man quarreled with the deceased and in the presence of the sheriff said that he would 'get even'. That can only be construed in the light of what followed, that he meant he intended to kill a certain man. And he did. How he killed him, he will not tell. But the

sheriff caught him in the act of burying the body. And all we can get out of the defendant is the statement that he was digging for gold."

The judge nodded.

"Can you amplify that statement?" he asked, looking at Jud.

Jud turned to his counsel and as he did his eyes swept the face of juror number six.

"He means," said the youthful attorney, "to——"

But Jud wasn't paying attention. Juror number six was grinning at him and Jud noticed two gold teeth in the front of juror number six's mouth. They were very prominent. Fascinated, Jud stared. Gold! That was all he was thinking.

"You understand?" asked the lawyer.

"I was digging for gold," said Jud mechanically.

Someone in the courtroom laughed.

"Order!" said the judge, rapping his gavel.

Facing the Court, Jud Harrows blinked his eyes. How could he explain what he meant? How could he explain how that gold came into his possession? He could have said that he had brought gold back from his travels, omitting, of course, the part about an old sea captain. But then that aggressive prosecutor would want to know why he had buried it. And no matter what the answer, all this would not be sufficient to offset the strong circumstantial evidence in which he was involved. He had been "caught in the act," as the prosecutor put it, burying Silas Flint's body. No one in the courtroom would believe otherwise.

Perhaps Jud Harrows knew it. Perhaps he was so affected that all they could get out of him was that he had been digging for gold. That to him seemed to explain the situation. That statement alone was the only one he offered to account for his presence on the night when the sheriff had come upon him on his farm.

In the course of the trial he was examined by alienists who pronounced him insane. He was committed to an institution several miles from Medville.

JUROR number six, Mr. Lemuel Tent, knew that Jud Harrows had made a truthful statement. But what Mr. Tent couldn't understand was why Jud hadn't gone into details and told the Court why he was digging for gold. Whose gold was it, anyway? Was it Jud's? Or if it wasn't, how did Jud know that there was gold buried on his farm?

Though he was unable to understand part of what was a mystery to him, Mr. Tent chuckled over the mystery that it must have been to Jud when he discovered that body. That part Mr. Tent could have explained fully.

It was Mr. Tent who had put the body there after he had murdered Silas Flint for his own good reasons. And with cunning he had decided to bury the body on Jud's farm, remembering that Jud and Silas Flint had quarreled. Jud, he had recalled, had made the threat in the presence of the sheriff that he would "get even" with Silas.

So, in the event of the body being discovered, Lemuel Tent had reasoned, indications would point to Jud. He had dug where the soil was soft and uneven and in digging he had found gold!

Several weeks after Jud's commitment, Mr. Tent thought of the possibility of more gold being on that farm. Perhaps—the thought struck him with wonderment—there was gold buried at different spots and to dig was the way to find out.

So he decided that some night he

would go over to Harrows' farm and look around.

AT the institution, Jud was giving no trouble to his keepers. But while they didn't know it, he was bitterly resentful. There were moments when he couldn't understand the reason for his confinement. There were times when the thought came to him that he had a duty to perform. Just what it was he didn't know, but in the back of his distorted brain there was something that kept trying to come to the surface.

One night he said to one of the keepers, "Why am I here? Who are you, anyway?"

"It's all right," said the keeper. "You're here because we like you. Now sit back and don't worry."

The keeper had a brass key and it reminded Jud of something.

"That's gold you have, isn't it?" said Jud.

"No, that's brass," said the keeper, holding the key up.

"No, it's gold," said Jud. "You'd better give it to me to bury."

"All right," said the keeper kindly. "Some time if you're real good I'll let you bury it."

He went off and reported the conversation to his superior. "Funny," said the superior. "You remember they couldn't get much out of him at the trial. But he kept talkin' about gold. Let me speak to him."

The superior went up and greeted Jud cordially.

"How are you tonight?" he said.

Jud stared at him.

"What's this I hear about gold?" said the superior quietly.

"Gold?" Jud gazed at him. "Gold," he said. "Yes, gold. Bury it."

"But why should you want to bury gold?" said the superior, hoping to learn something.

Jud looked at him and answered, "There's gold. I must bury it."

The superior went away unable to draw Jud out further, but something came back into Jud Harrows' twisted brain. More than ever, now he would have to escape from the institution. He had left much undone. He had left a number of gold pieces on the kitchen table and unless he buried them, they would be discovered and his murder found out.

He couldn't seem to realize, at least at certain moments, that he was confined to this institution because he was insane. If he thought of that at all it didn't worry him. But he had the notion, that now grew on him daily, that unless he covered up his tracks the police would be on his trail.

Murder! That stood out clearly in his memory time and again. He had murdered an old sea captain for gold.

ONE night, when the guard least expected it, Jud told him to come closer, that he had a seceret to tell him. And the guard, thinking that Jud was about to impart information that would clear up the mystery, came readily, and Jud grabbed him around the throat. Jud, with the strength of a maniac, choked him. Then he stole keys and escaped. Before he left the institution, he cracked another guard over the head. His escape wasn't discovered until several minutes later, when a general alarm was sent out.

By that time Jud was well up the road. A sense of freedom intoxicated him and he danced and sang. But as something percolated through his brain, he remembered that he had a duty to perform. He would have to get to his farmhouse and bury the gold.

He was to be deflected in his movements, however, for as he raced along the road, he heard an automobile coming in his wake. The guards were after him, no doubt of it, and he ran into woods on the right.

Here he got lost and couldn't find

his way out. But he didn't want to go out. He wanted to keep off the road. Most of all, he didn't want to go near his house. The guards would go there, but he would fool them. Oddly enough, for the moment he forgot about the gold.

He prowled around the woods for hours and then, when he grew tired, sought shelter in a cave. It had started to rain. Weary and disgusted, Jud Harrows curled himself up on the floor and fell asleep.

Daylight awoke him. Sunbeams played on his face. He got up, stretched, and tried to remember where he was. Then it came back to him. He had escaped. The thought of the gold now disturbed him. He must get it, bury it, or his murder would be found out.

But he couldn't venture forth in the daylight. And perhaps the guards had already visited the place. It was too late to cover up his trail. His brain whirled with a lot of inconsistent thoughts.

He suddenly decided that the guards hadn't pursued him and that there was yet time to complete his work. But he would wait until night. No, he would live in these woods all his life.

He started to climb trees; tiring of this, he wandered down to a brook. He drank and shoved his face in the water and splashed water over his head. Then he arose and started through the woods.

He came to the edge and saw berries on the other side of the road. He went over and ate greedily. And this appeasing his appetite, he slunk back through the woods and entered the cave. For hours he sat brooding. Then turning over, he slept.

It was late in the afternoon when he awoke. The sun had shifted and it had grown cold. He shivered in a corner of the cave, thought of building a fire but didn't know how to produce a light. So he ran out and started to climb trees. It warmed his blood. He was feeling better now and as the twilight descended, a peculiar expression came into Jud Harrows' eyes. Night, darkness and gold! Gold! He would bury it.

MR. LEMUEL TENT heard that day that Jud Harrows had escaped. But it didn't worry him. Mr. Tent had been visiting the Harrows' farm for the last three nights digging for gold. He had seen an automobile filled with men stop at the Harrows farmhouse the night before and had viewed them from a safe distance down the farm. He had been careful enough not to reveal his presence and had left by a back road.

It was not until this morning that he understood the reason for the visit. Jud Harrows had escaped. Guards had come after him, but Jud had not been found. It was thought by the guards, so the rumor went, that Jud was miles away.

Groups stood in the village discussing this latest excitement that had come to Medville's door. In the barber shop, in the grocery, in the post office and on every corner, natives exchanged opinions and shook their heads.

Some went over the whole trial in which Jud was involved. Some even went back to the time when he had crushed a small bird in his hand. And all agreed that he was 'a bad egg' and that if he wasn't caught he might still do harm.

But over this, Mr. Tent merely smiled. He was of the opinion that Jud was miles away. The guards had said so, though there was some talk of scouring the woods between the two towns.

This, in fact, was already going on. As darkness closed in, Jud Harrows peeked out of the cave and saw a moving figure a hundreed feet away.

But the wood was dense and the area large and the figure went the other way.

Jud waited. He waited hours, it seemed, and then when it grew darker he left the cave. But a slight noise sent him scurrying back. Like a hunted animal he sat within the cave, peering out, mind alert, mind that now hammered with that insistent song: He must cover up his tracks.

It was that that started him forward again only to retreat. Noises in the wood alarmed him. But they were not noises made by man.

After hours he seemed to realize this and he rushed out throwing caution to the winds. He would have to get to his farmhouse. He had lost too much time.

He stumbled and fell and had difficulty making his way through the woods. The night was dark and he relied upon blind luck to see him through.

At last he emerged onto the open road, his hands and face scratched. Now which way should he go?

To the right, he decided, and he started to run. But he hadn't covered a hundred yards when he stopped. An automobile was coming down the road. He sprang back and hid behind a tree, waiting for the automobile to pass. Then when it had whizzed by, he stepped out.

He would have to hurry now. The police, those fellows who had been worrying him, loomed up in his mind. He had covered a half mile when he heard voices. People coming down the road. He sprang back and waited for them to pass. And then, when they were well out of earshot, he stepped out and started to run.

His legs raced along the road, his head drooped. At last he saw the bend that would take him within a few yards of his farmhouse. He increased his speed.

But as he drew near the house, shaking and muttering, he paused. There was a light down on the farm. The light was moving as if the light walked. In his fanciful imagination, he believed that the light did walk and of a sudden he forgot all about the gold and his desire to bury it. He wanted to catch that light.

It seemed less than a hundred feet away. It was really more than that. A hundred and fifty feet, perhaps. But as he started forward, he had the notion that the light was near him, almost within his grasp. He held out his hands. He wanted that light. And then the light stopped.

He stood still for a second trying to understand this. The light had stopped. He blinked his eyes. Then as he discerned the outline of a figure near the light, he dropped on his hands and knees. There was a man near the light and the man was his enemy. All men.

He started to crawl carefully, barely making a sound. Nearer and nearer he drew to that light and so nearer and nearer to the man.

And when he was within five feet of him the man turned. The man opened his mouth in astonishment and Jud Harrows saw two gold teeth.

The light from a lantern played on them, sending Jud Harrows into a spasm of joy. He saw what he had come to bury. The man, recognizing him, shrieked for him to stand back.

But Jud only laughed and grabbed the spade that the man was holding. He cracked the man over the head and the body, lifeless, dropped and fell into the hole that the man had been digging. There was gold in that hole, Jud reflected. Gold! He started throwing clods of dirt on Lemuel Tent.

Still Within the Law

By BAYARD VEILLER

Author of "Within The Law," "The Thirteenth Chair," etc.

A THREE PART STORY—PART II.

WHAT HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

DURING a dance given at his home, Mr. Sinclair discovers that Boris Morton has stolen a rope of pearls from one of his guests. He quietly forces him to return the necklace but promises to notify the police in the morning.

While Mr. Sinclair is in the library with his old friend Mr. Travis, whose daughter, Mary, has just become engaged to Dick Sinclair, he is shot dead by Morton, who escapes unseen.

All evidence points to Mr. Travis as the murderer. The lawyer whom he retains forces Mary to break her engagement without reason, hoping, thereby, to make young Sinclair seem to testify against her father in revenge.

At the trial Sinclair sees through the scheme and, sensing in it a means of helping the father of his fiancée, is deliberately allowing the court to believe that her action made a difference in his testimony.

Mary, detecting her sweetheart's sacrifice, rises sharply and dramatically interrupts.

CHAPTER VII.

PERJURY

HER rising had attracted the judge's attention, and as she moved forward quickly he sat staring at her. Her father's attorney was at her side immediately He showed none of the sudden panic which her movement had caused him as he threw his arm about her shoulders and tried to lead her back to her seat.

In ordinary circumstances the old man would have whispered to her, but there close beside him was that fascinating twelve-stringed instrument, the jury, awaiting to be played upon.

"Now, my dear child," he cried suddenly, "you mustn't get excited. Everything's all right."

Mary broke away from him and ran forward until she stood directly in front of the high seat on which the judge was sitting.

"Everything's all wrong," she cried. "Oh, judge, please, can't I speak to you?"

Before the girl could go further, both her own lawyer and the District Attroney tried to stop her. A movement of the judge's hand silenced the two lawyers. He leaned toward the girl and spoke very quietly.

"Do you realize the importance of stopping the trial in the way you have?" he asked.

The girl nodded.

"You said just now that everything was all wrong. It must be very wrong to make you interpose as you have. What is it you want to say to me?"

"May it please the court," cried the old lawyer before the girl could speak, "may I ask for a recess in order to consult with my client before this matter goes any further? Manifestly this girl is hysterical and cannot realize what she is doing."

"I am not hysterical," said Mary, "but father and I won't take advantage of the lies that are being told here now."

The judge stared at her.

"You mean that perjury is being committed?" he asked.

The girl shook her head.

"No, sir," she said. "But things have happened and are happening that are not true. There's trickery and deceit, and my father and I don't believe that his innocence can be shown in any such way."

The judge looked first at the District Attorney and then at Travis' lawyer with a grim smile.

"This is very interesting," he said. Then after a short moment of thought he continued, "I think we'll hear what the young lady has to say under oath."

He swung around in his chair and glowered at young Sinclair, who from the witness seat was staring incredulously at Mary.

"The witness is excused for a moment, but will not leave the courtroom," he said finally.

The boy left the witness stand and took a vacant chair near the District Attorney.

"NOW, young lady," said the judge, as he pointed to the vacant chair, "we'll hear what you have to say."

Mary made her way past the District Attorney, ignored the furtive detaining gesture of her own counsel, and made her way to the witness stand.

The judge had turned half way round in his seat so that he squarely faced the girl as she stood on the witness stand ready to take her seat.

"We'll have this under oath," said the judge.

He picked up the well-worn Bible and handed it to Mary. Unconsciously the girl took the book in both hands and held it to her breast. Her face was white, her eyes eager and solemn.

She was so intent on what she had to do that there was no room for other emotions. She was not frightened or self-conscious. And so, standing, she faced the judge with great gravity. It was no quickly gabbled oath which fell from his lips. Slowly, ponderously, he spoke the words.

"Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?" he said gravely.

"I do," said Mary.

Her eyes were fixed on the judge, and her action in slowly raising the Bible to her lips and kissing it, which at other times and in other conditions would have been theatrical in the extreme, was a movement entirely unconscious and because of that unconsciousness and simplicity became doubly effective.

"I do," she said again, as she placed the Bible on the judge's desk. At his nod she sank into the witness chair.

When she looked up, Mary forgot all about the court, and the man looking down at her was no longer a judge but a kind old gentleman who beamed on her as he said, "And now, my dear, suppose you tell us all about it."

At this point the old lawyer interposed again. "Your Honor," he said, "may I have my objection recorded?"

"As often as you like," snapped the

judge. "Now, my dear, go ahead," he said, turning once more to Mary.

The girl didn't wait to arrange her facts. Completely reassured by the judge's kind manner, she spoke to him as one seeking advice or help rather than as a witness in a murder trial.

"I asked my father what to do," said she quickly, "before I spoke to you, judge, and he said that he didn't want his freedom at the cost of another man's honor."

The old lawyer half rose from his chair at this, but sank back into it at a curt nod from the judge.

"I don't think I understand what you mean, child."

"I couldn't bear to have you look at him as if he were something terrible."

The judge understood her perfectly. "But he had practically admitted his desire for revenge," said the judge.

"That's just it," said the girl. "That's the terrible part about it. He didn't say he wanted revenge, but he let everyone think he did."

She paused only long enough to give one quick look at her lover, and then she went on: "And he isn't a bit that kind of a man, not a bit. Don't you see, judge, what was happening?"

"No," said the judge, "I don't."

MARY gave thought to this.

"No," she conceded, "I don't suppose you did, but any woman would. He thought he'd help dad. That's what he was trying to do. He was willing to let everyone think that he was vile and contemptible if it would help my father. But dad and I don't want that kind of help, do we, father?"

Travis smiled gravely at his daughter and shook his head.

At this Mary turned eagerly to the judge. "Now don't you see?" she said.

"I am afraid I don't," replied the judge.

"Just after father was arrested," explained the girl, "he made me send the ring back to Dick."

"Your lawyer did?" asked the judge.

"Yes," said Mary. "He wouldn't let me write to him and he told me I mustn't see him; that all I could do was to send back the ring."

"And you didn't want to do that?" said the judge.

"Of course not," said the girl. "But he said I had to. That it was the only way I could help dad. And so I did it. And, judge," she went on, "I didn't know until a few minutes ago why he wanted it done.

"But when he turned on Dick that way, when he tried to make people believe that Dick, who was only telling the truth, was trying to get revenge, I saw that he had planned this thing months ago."

For a moment no one spoke. Then a new thought came to the girl.

"Judge," she said earnestly, "I don't know anything about courts or the way they're run or what's proper or isn't proper, but will you put that man on the witness stand again and let me question him?"

At this both attorneys were on their feet protesting.

The old judge waved them aside.

"Be calm, gentlemen," he smiled.

"This court is, of course, eager to learn the truth, but we'll take great care that there is no mistrial here. Certainly neither of you can object to the court's asking the witness a few questions."

"But, judge," began Mary.

"My dear," said the judge, "I think that you and I are very eager seekers after truth, and I think perhaps through my questions we will drag it out."

The skill with which the judge examined young Sinclair when the lat-

ter had returned to the witness stand reminded the court attendants of the day not so long ago when the judge had been the District Attorney.

First he reassured the boy and then drew from him the information he was seeking—how he had suddenly realized that pretending to a feeling which did not exist might help the women he loved. And with this avowal the judge's examination ended.

THE District Attorney was on his feet immediately.

"Under the rules of evidence," he said smilingly, "I am not permitted to ask you your motives for doing certain things, so I will put my question in this way: You wanted to help Mr. Travis?"

"Yes," said the boy.

"And because of that desire to help him you allowed me and the gentlemen of the jury to regard you in a most unfavorable light?"

Young Sinclair began to fence.

"I don't think——," he began.

"Answer me yes or no," shouted the District Attorney.

"Yes," said the boy.

"You cherish highly your personal honesty, do you not?"

The witness nodded.

"And your reputation as a man is dear to you, is it not? I want that question answered yes or no."

"Yes," said the boy.

"And you would not have sacrificed lightly that reputation to aid the prisoner?"

The boy shook his head.

"So that when you did sacrifice it, it was because such a sacrifice was necessary. Isn't that a fact?"

The witness turned to the judge.

"Do I have to answer that question, your Honor?"

"Yes," said the judge, "you do."

"I wanted to help," said the boy.

"I didn't ask you that," shouted the District Attorney. "Because of something in your own mind, some feeling you had about Mr. Travis, you were willing to appear before these gentlemen in a most despicable light? Yes or no?"

"Yes," said Sinclair finally.

"You were willing to throw away everything you held most dear in such a cause?"

The boy nodded.

The District Attorney suddenly turned to the jury with a little laugh.

"Gentlemen, that's our case," and abruptly sat down.

CHAPTER VIII.

HIGH STAKES

"WELL, gentlemen," said the foreman of the jury, "let's take a vote."

The youngest member looked furtively at his watch and suggested going to dinner first.

Another member laughed and said with a yawn, "Oh, let's take our vote and then go home to dinner."

The foreman looked at him and grinned.

"That ain't such a bad idea," he said slowly, "there isn't much to argue about now. I guess we're pretty well agreed what we are going to do. I don't believe it's going to be necessary to write out our votes."

He stopped long enough to light a cigar with great care and took two or three deep puffs.

"I'll tell you one thing," he went on. "This sitting in a courtroom all day without a chance to smoke is pretty tough."

On this point the jury was unanimous.

"Of course, we don't want to seem to hurry too much. That wouldn't look right, would it? And, anyhow, there's no reason the state shouldn't blow us to one good feed. God knows we've given them a lot of our time.

I tell you what let's do. We'll take a vote, then we'll go eat. After dinner we'll have a smoke and a chat and then we'll bring in our verdict in time to get home nice and early and comfortable."

"I'd like to get home for my dinner," said one of the jurors with a little laugh of embarrassment. "I haven't been married very long and my wife will be nervous."

"Yeh, that's so," said another, "mine will give me hell, too. I don't see any sense in waiting round on this thing. I'm for taking a vote and going home."

"All right," said the foreman; "all those in favor of conviction will stand up."

He himself rose pompously and nine others rose with him. The foreman looked in plain amazement at the two men who had remained seated.

"Well, what do you know about that?" he said finally. He turned to the older of the two men. "I don't think I got your name," he said politely.

"Grosmutter," said the juror.

"Oh!" said the foreman. "Born in this country?"

The juror nodded.

"Well, I didn't mean anything personal," said the foreman. "I just wanted to know."

He walked around the table to where the juror was seated and sat beside him.

"Of course, everybody's got a right to his opinion," he said finally, "but I've been on a lot of juries, and if I ever saw an 'open and shut' case, this is it. Why listen, my friend, there wasn't any defense. All they said was he didn't do it and somebody else did."

"Yes," said Grosmutter, "but that fellow seemed like a nice man. The girl's father, I mean. What would he want to kill his friend for?"

"Now, what's the use of bringing up a lot of stuff like that?" said the foreman. "Didn't the judge tell us we gotta be ruled by the evidence?"

He turned to the other jurors who had gathered in a close circle about them.

"That's true, isn't it, gents?"

It was admitted that that was true.

"I heard him as good as you did," said Grosmutter, "but I got sense, and I got intelligence, and I don't believe he did it, and I ain't gonna vote for 'Guilty.'"

At this there was an awkward little pause.

"I tell you what let's do," said the foreman finally, "let's go round to Feigenspan's and eat."

"Well," said Grosmutter with a little laugh, "I vote yes to that."

BY noon the next day the sixteenth ballot had been cast by twelve soiled, unshaven and red-eyed men. The jury stood 11 to 1 for conviction.

All of the usages of polite society had been thrown aside hours before. Grosmutter, sullen and solitary, sat in one corner of the room. The others were in an angry little group.

"I wouldn't care," said the foreman loudly, "but he won't listen to reason."

Grosmutter lifted his head and regarded them venomously.

"Reason," he shouted. "What's reason got to do with it? I ain't no weather-cock."

"No," admitted the foreman, "you ain't."

He detached himself from the others and walked over to the lone juror.

"Now listen here, friend," he said, "there's nothing for you or me to get sore about. You've got a perfect right to your opinion and I respect you for it. Don't I, fellows?" he said, turning to the others.

They all nodded solemnly.

"But the judge said we had to agree on a verdict. Don't you see that if we get another trial it's gonna cost a lot of money?" He paused to let this fact sink in. "Now, I ask yah, just as man to man, ain't our taxes high enough now?"

The juror softened perceptibly.

"Sure," he said, "they're terrible."

"There you are," said the foreman. "What's the use of sticking out for a new trial and piling up more taxes on us?"

Grosmutter gave careful thought to this.

"Well, I guess you're right about that," said he finally, "more taxes would be terrible."

There was a long pause as the others looked at him eagerly.

"But I guess I won't change my vote," he said finally.

An hour later the foreman came to him again.

"Listen, Dutchy," he said angrily, "you're nothing but a damn mule. It's no use arguing with ya. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll fight you for it. If you win, we all vote to let him go, and if I win, you change your vote. How about it?"

"I don't fight," said Grosmutter.

The foreman retreated.

Then another plan came to his mind. He devoted half an hour to working it out in detail. Then he yawned ostentatiously and turned to another juror.

"I wish I had a pack of cards. I could certainly trim you fellows at pinochle. I don't want to brag, but I'm the best pinochle player in this room."

"You are not," said Grosmutter.

The foreman gave a quick warning look to the other men which stopped their laughter as it began to rise. He turned truculently toward the lone juror.

"Don't make me laugh," he shouted. "I've forgotten more about pinochle than you ever knew."

GROSMUTTER rose with the light of battle in his eye and walked over to the other juror. His voice was guttural with emotion.

"That," he said, "is a damn lie. I play you pinochle any time, any place, for anything you like."

The foreman looked at him and laughed again.

"You tell it well," he said, "but I'm betting you don't know the first thing about the game. You haven't got brains enough to play pinochle."

Grosmutter could only sputter his indignation and rage.

"I can't play pinochle?" he shouted. "I, Herman Grosmutter, can't play pinochle?"

He leaned forward until his face was close to that of the man who was so skillfully baiting him.

"Ass," he shouted. "I play pinochle with all the great players. I play pinochle all the time. With me it is a life study." Suddenly he reached in his pocket and pulled out a well-thumbed deck of cards.

"Never am I without my cards even." He pointed to the table.

"Sit down, you," he cried, "now we play pinochle."

"For how much?" asked the foreman as he took a seat.

"What do I care?" shouted Grosmutter. "I always win. I play you for anything you like."

The foreman laughed up at him.

"Talking a lot, aren't you?" he sneered.

"Well, what are we waiting for? Come on, let's play."

"You name the stakes. What are we going to play for?"

"Stakes! Stakes! What do I care? I play you for anything. You name the stakes."

"You'll play for any stakes I name?" asked the foreman quietly.

"Sure," said Grosmutter.

The foreman turned to the others.

"You heard what he said, gents?"

They nodded and crowded around the table. The foreman picked up the cards and began to shuffle them.

"All right," he said slowly, "I'll play you three games for your vote."

"What?" shouted Grosmutter.

"You said it," said the foreman. "These gentlemen vote with me," he went on, as he looked toward the jurors. "If you win we'll all vote the way you want us to. If I win, we'll vote for conviction."

There was a long pause at this. Finally the foreman laughed unpleasantly.

"I told you you were afraid," he haunted.

Grosmutter's face grew purple.

"Go on and deal," he shouted.

RED-EYED, but triumphant, the foreman of the jury led his companions back into the courtroom.

Well versed in the ways of courts and juries, neither the District Attorney nor the scheming old counsel for the defense needed to wait for the bare announcement that they had agreed.

The District Attorney flashed a look of grinning triumph at his adversary and then once more spread a cloak of dignity and judicial calm to hide the joyous tingling of his ambitious young body.

As the jury seated themselves, the silence in the courtroom was suddenly broken by a harsh staccato cough. Morton, who throughout the trial had been seated in obscurity among the crowd of onlookers, had suddenly lost his self-control, and had smothered an almost involuntary shout of relief in a cough hastily manufactured for that purpose.

If anyone had turned suddenly he would have seen his strained, white face standing out from the throng as he sat with eyes fixed on a jury whose verdict his agitation prevented him from sensing. But no one turned; no one saw him, and the only peril in which he had stood since the hour of the murder passed on.

At the verdict, Mary pressed closer to her father and with a little sob turned her face against him. Travis held his daughter close in his arms. At that moment it was his courage and his steadfast faith that did service for two.

Young Sinclair, forgetting court rules and court etiquette, started to go to the girl he loved, but sank back to his seat at a sharp admonition from the gavel in the hands of the court clerk.

With the announcement of the verdict all the personal equations which had hitherto seemed the most marked characteristics of this trial were dishonored. They were all submerged by the clock-like routine of the court.

Travis was remanded for sentence.

A somewhat bewildered jury stolidly received the thanks of the court for a duty well performed.

The perfunctory motions for the setting aside of the verdict as against the evidence, the formal notice of an appeal, were gone through as a matter of course.

Then Travis went back to his cell; Mary to her desolate home.

Morton made hasty preparations for a trip to Europe.

CHAPTER IX

GROPING

THE two-year period of waiting for the decision of the Court of Appeals in her father's case changed Mary Travis from a young girl into a woman. The change was mental and spiritual rather than physical. She

had the same appealing look, the same gentle manner, and the iron which had entered his spirit was hidden under these.

The girl had refused to listen to young Sinclair's pleading, and had made their marriage a thing entirely dependent on her father's freedom. Her love for the boy was held in abeyance by her father's greater need.

Every minute that the law allowed she spent with her father. Her only thought was his comfort and happiness, and to the man in prison her faith, her boundless love, and her ever-ready spirit of contagious joy which she kept solely for her father were a tower of strength.

The girl had grown in many ways. If she had lost her faith in the power of truth to prevail, she had gained in place of it a faculty for keen reasoning and skill at analysis which served her more efficiently. While forced to wait for the decision of the higher court Mary was not waiting in idleness.

Starting with the fact that her father had not killed Sinclair, she was confronted with the equally undoubtable fact that someone had.

She was not content to hope unreasonably for a new trial but instead busied herself in an effort to solve a problem which in its last analysis resolved itself to this question: *if her father had not killed Sinclair, who had?*

For two years the girl had worked on this task. Given a gathering of a hundred and fifty people of which one was a murderer, how find that one?

Detectives when employed had been ready enough to take the girl's money, but their reports were vague and led nowhere. For a time the newspapers tried to solve the problem, but soon devoted their front pages to other sensations, and within a year the Sinclair case had been forgotten by all but four people—the man in prison under sentence of death; his daughter, who was trying to solve a mystery which had defied solution by many minds; the son of the murdered man, whose efforts to aid the woman he loved were futile; and Morton, who strove to forget the murder in the excitements of Monte Carlo.

There his luck still held, and he was rapidly acquiring a fortune. And then, for no reason he could himself fathom, he hurried blindly home to America.

For the first time since that day in court he was overwhelmed by a sense of his own peril. He fought against this, but eventually he yielded to what he felt was an imperative need of returning to the scene of his crime.

He got no relief from his return to America. He wanted to know what was being done and more particularly he was concerned with the activities of Mary Travis. He was rather chagrined to find that the murder which he had committed so daringly had been forgotten.

MORTON had never known remorse; he had experienced fear on some occasions. The morning after the murder had been a wretched one for him, and there had been that single moment as the jury walked into the courtroom. And once in Monte Carlo his heart had skipped a beat when a friend, coming up behind him, had laid a sudden hand on his shoulder.

But for the most time Morton had experienced a certain elation. He had escaped every consequence of his wrong-doing. The theft of the necklace had been known to but one man and that man he had killed.

But now he was confronted by something more terrifying than a knowledge of pursuit. A complete silence enveloped the case.

Even the people who had been present at the time of the murder seemed to have forgotten it. Travis' name was never mentioned, nor was that of his daughter. Sinclair seemingly had disappeared, and Morton was too shrewd a man and too strongly imbued with a sense of his own peril to take the risk of asking questions.

The thing began to prey on his mind. A search through the files of the newspapers for the past year yielded no information. The case was not mentioned.

Morton began to dread seeing his old friends. The thought that inadvertently he might ask some self-betraying question became an obsession. He was like a man in the dark surrounded by unknown enemies, and like a man in the dark he groped unavailing to find them.

The same darkness enveloped Mary Travis. So there were the two groping figures, the girl stumbling blindly, now falling over some unseen obstacle, now pressing onward in what seemed a futile search.

Time after time her fingers seemed to grasp some one thing which might lead to the solution of her problem, only to find it elusive. And so with the man, shielding himself from nameless terror—both struggling, both eager, tense, one to capture, the other to evade, and both in pitch darkness.

MORTON could have shouted with joy when he picked up a newspaper which carried in screaming headlines:

TRAVIS MUST DIE

COURT OF APPEALS SUSTAINS VERDICT OF RICH MAN'S GUILT.

Instead, he coughed, the same crackling staccato gust of breath with which he had greeted the jury's verdict on the terrifying day in court. Then more calmly he went about the business of his daily occupations. For the time being his fears were conquered, but his rest was brief.

The next morning in even larger headlines came the appeal from the girl. In heavy double-leaded type it screamed from the front page of every newspaper.

I KNOW THAT MY FATHER IS INNOCENT. I HAVE LESS THAN THREE MONTHS IN WHICH TO PROVE THIS. I AM ALONE. WON'T SOMEONE HELP ME? I CALL ON EVERYONE WHO KNEW MY FATHER FOR AID.

And then, at the bottom of this, in facsimile of her own writing, the signature "Mary Travis."

THE Governor of the state looked at his secretary with a puzzled frown.

"Did she say what she wanted?" he asked.

The secretary shook his head.

"No, sir," he replied. "But I think I know."

"A job?" asked the Governor.

"No, sir. She's the daughter of Travis, who's to be killed for the murder of Sinclair."

The Governor sighed deeply.

"Well," he said after a pause, "I'll have to see her."

The secretary walked toward the door.

"But, Jim," pleaded the Governor, "don't leave me alone with her. I can't have her weeping all over the place."

The secretary nodded and was about to open the door to admit the girl when he was stopped by the chief executive.

"It's no good, Jim. I can't stand it alone. Ask my wife if she can't

come down for a minute. She's in the building somewhere with a women's committee. Tell her I need her help. Then let the girl in."

The secretary laughed.

"I know it," mourned the Governor. "I'm a darn coward, but I can't help it."

There was another pause. Again the Governor stopped his secretary.

"What's the girl like, anyhow?" he asked.

The secretary walked all the way back to the executive's desk.

"I didn't like to tell you," he said finally, "but she sort of reminds me of your daughter."

The Governor showed signs of even greater distress.

"That's the finish," he wailed. "Darn you, why didn't you tell me that before? If she's like Grace I'm licked. Go get my wife."

In the anteroom Mary waited patiently. Politicians, office seekers, reformers, and millionaires cooled their heels in chairs beside her. They were busy with their own thoughts and their own affairs.

Finally, the door from the Executive Chamber opened and the secretary with a little nod toward Mary said: "The Governor will see you now, Miss Travis."

It would be pleasant to record the fact that when Mary entered the Executive Chamber she saw a benign, white-haired old gentleman seated at the desk, while beside him was a plump, gray-haired, serene woman of middle age who sat with folded hands looking expectantly toward the door.

But Mary saw nothing of the sort. A rugged, iron-faced man of about fifty, his hair slightly grayed about the temples, was standing by his desk smoking a cigarette and talking to his wife.

The Governor's lady, the mother of two grown daughters, looked all of thirty. She was charming and gracious and young, and instead of serenity, there came from her a sense of buoyant vitality.

She was laughing at the Governor as the door opened, and as she came into the room Mary heard her say, "Bill, I'm ashamed of you. You're a coward."

"Gosh," said the Goveror, "don't I know it?"

Then he turned and saw the girl as she advanced quietly toward him.

CHAPTER X

THE GOVERNOR

MARY'S face was grave as she looked first at the Governor and then at his wife, but there were no tears in her eyes, no pathetic droop to her mouth, and her step did not falter. The Governor and his wife exchanged quick glances. Then the former dropped his cigarette into an ash-tray and turned gravely toward the girl.

He shook hands with her silently and led her to his wife.

"My dear," said the Governor, "this is Miss Travis who has probably come to ask me to pardon her father."

"Oh, no," said Mary hastily, "I haven't."

"You don't want a pardon for your father?" asked the Governor's wife.

The girl shook her head.

The Governor's wife rose quickly and went to the girl. The unexpected answer had intrigued her interest and aroused her sympathy as no tearful plea could have done.

"Why, my dear," cried the older woman, "then what can we do for you?"

Instinctively, Mary made her appeal to the other woman. With barely a glance at the chief executive of the state, she turned to the latter's wife.

"Won't you make him forget that he's Governor?" she cried.

Then as the others looked at her in astonishment she went on, "My father didn't kill Mr. Sinclair."

Her very earnestness kept the others grave.

"I'm trying to find the man who did. I went to ten of the best lawyers I could find and I asked each of them what lawyer could best tell me what to do. I've tried everything—I've been to everyone."

She turned suddenly toward the Governor.

"Do you want to know what each of those ten men said to me?"

The Governor nodded.

"Each man said," continued Mary, "and almost in the same words, 'if Bill Harkness weren't Governor I'd send you to him.'"

The Governor flushed a little, and although he knew that his wife was looking at him with a tolerant and amused grin of perfect understanding, he couldn't suppress the self-conscious flattered smile which came to his face.

"Very nice of them, I'm sure," he said dryly.

It's doubtful if Mary even heard him.

"Mrs. Harkness," she cried, "make him help me. He can do it. He can show me how to go on—tell me what to do."

"But, my dear," interrupted Harkness, "don't you see that as Governor of the state——"

"I don't want to talk to the Governor of the state," cried Mary. "They told me to talk to Bill Harkness."

She turned quickly again to the older woman.

"Oh, Mrs. Harkness," she cried, "make him do it. Please make him do it."

THE older woman moved quickly to the girl's side. Mary turned to face her and the other woman stared into the face of the young girl. Mary's wide open eyes held no secrets, and with a little nod of satisfaction the Governor's wife patted her on the shoulder and walked to the door which led to the outer room.

As she opened it the Governor's secretary appeared with that magic which marks the conduct of all efficient secretaries.

"The Governor," said Mrs. Harkness, "will be engaged for the rest of the morning. He can see no one and must not be disturbed."

She closed the door and walked back to the girl.

"My dear," she said comfortably, "sit down and tell us all about it."

Mary did so. When she had finished the Governor needed no urging to forget his official position. A pile of half-smoked cigarette butts on the desk in front of him attested to his absorption in the problem the girl had given him.

His wife was sitting close to the desk leaning forward, her chin cupped in the palm of her hand as she listened to the girl. Her interest was as keen as that of her husband.

"And so you see," concluded Mary, "I don't know what to do."

"How do you know Sinclair had no enemies?" said Harkness abruptly.

Mrs. Harkness looked at him quickly with a little nod and smile and settled back in her chair contentedly. She had never been sure that her husband was a good Governor, but she was certain that he was a great criminal lawyer, and after many years of marriage she still thrilled at the all too frequent exhibitions of his alert criminal mind.

"His son and I have gone over his life day by day for ten years," said the girl. "His son has read all of his

papers and all of his letters. He had no enemies," she said.

"Must have had," said Harkness. "Somebody hated him enough to kill him."

Mary shook her head.

"We couldn't find anyone," she said simply.

"How about your father?" snapped Harkness. "He and Sinclair always got on together?"

"Oh, Bill," said Mrs. Harkness.

Her husband waved her aside.

"If I'm going to help you, Miss Travis," said the Governor, "I must have the truth."

"I want you to," said Mary.

"Well, how about it?" went on Harkness.

"I can best answer your question," said Mary, "by telling you that Mr. Sinclair and my father had one ambition in common—to be grandfathers—and they wanted to be grandfathers to the same child, Dick's and mine."

HARKNESS grinned.

"Then they couldn't have rowed about that," he said finally.

Mary flushed.

"Not exactly," she said with a little laugh, "Dick and I had only just become engaged."

"In your own mind, Miss Travis, are you certain that up to the night of the murder Mr. Sinclair had no enemies who desired his death?"

"Yes," said the girl.

Harkness thought this over.

"Perhaps there was some secret," he began slowly.

"There was no secret," said Mary.

"I'll talk to his son," said Harkness.

"Whenever you like. But, Mr. Harkness, Dick loves me and I love Dick, and we can't marry with this thing hanging over us. He wouldn't lie to me, and if there was anything in his father's life that would give a faint indication of anything that would show us a way out of this trouble, he'd tell me. Nothing could prevent it."

"But you don't object to my seeing him?" said Harkness.

"Of course not," said the girl.

There was another pause.

"For the present time," said the Governor finally, "we'll take it that up to the night of the murder Sinclair had no enemy. There was no one to profit by his sudden death."

"Yes," said the girl, "I know that is true."

"All right," snapped Harkness, "then what happened that night to make him such an enemy? Why was it necessary to kill him then?"

"I don't know," said Mary.

"Then find out," snapped Harkness.

Mrs. Harkness beamed on her husband. "Atta boy, Bill," she said to herself. Aloud she was more grave.

"My dear," she said with a courtesy which no wife uses toward her husband except in public, "may I ask one question?"

The Governor was about to say "Go to it," but caught himself in time and replied instead, "Certainly, my dear."

"Did anything happen at the dance that was out of the ordinary?"

"No," said Mary.

"There was no disturbance of any kind, no altercation?" went on the Governor's wife.

The girl shook her head.

"Are you sure of that?" continued the other woman.

"I heard and saw nothing," said the girl.

Mrs. Harkness threw a look to her husband which said plainer than words, "There's your line, Bill; follow it."

The Governor again questioned the girl.

"Could anything have happened that evening without your knowing it?"

Mary flushed.

"I don't think so," she said finally, "but it might have. You see, I was away from the crowd for a few minutes."

"About how long?" asked Harkness.

"I suppose about half an hour," said Mary.

"What were you doing?" asked the Governor's wife.

Mary's flush was a lovely thing.

"Getting engaged to Dick," she said finally.

"Did your father know about it?" asked Mrs. Harkness.

"Yes," said Mary.

"And Mr. Sinclair? Did he know?"

Mary nodded.

"Are you sure of this?" asked Harkness.

"Yes," said Mary, "I'm sure. He and father were talking together and Dick and I were dancing, and as we passed I held up my hand and showed him the ring."

"What did he do?" asked Mrs. Harkness.

"He grinned at me," said Mary, "and threw me a kiss, and then he and father went out of the room together. I think," she said with a smile, "they were going to get a drink."

Then for a few moments no one spoke. Harkness was thinking and Mrs. Harkness was too wise a woman to interrupt him.

"This narrows it down," said Harkness finally, "to finding out what happened, if anything, in the twenty minutes you were away. I shall want to know everything, no matter how trivial it seems to you."

He rose suddenly and held out his hand to the girl.

"Let me hear from you as soon as you can."

CHAPTER XI

THE NECKLACE

MURDER is a dreadful thing. It is bad for the murdered, and its effect on the murderer is deplorable. Instead of being thankful for his escape, Morton began to regard himself as a superman, above and beyond the law. His fear of discovery had given way to a sense of injury.

He felt that his special murder had been too soon forgotten. There was no pursuit, no longer any danger. Life was becoming dull. He no longer wakened in the morning with the harrowing thought of what the day might bring forth. He was now certain that it would bring forth nothing.

When he read Mary's appeal for help, his mind leaped to new possibilities as his imagination spread before him many ways in which this appeal might work against him. And so, quite unconsciously, Mary had enlisted help from a most unexpected quarter. In his efforts to forestall outside interference, Morton himself, all unconsciously, was destined to give to the girl the help of which she was so desperately in need.

At first the murderer could not determine what action to take, and then there came to his mind what at the moment he thought was a gorgeous thought. He would go to Mary and offer his aid in discovering the murderer of Sinclair.

Morton was greatly intrigued with this idea. It afforded him a great deal of amusement and he found himself smiling delightedly as his twisted mind evolved strange avenues into which he hoped to divert the girl's bewildered steps. It was weeks, however, before he ventured on definite action and in that delay he unwittingly laid the foundation for his own undoing.

In the meantime Mary had begun work along the lines suggested by the Governor. Step by step she went over the events of the night and when all the talk and gossip that came to her had been sifted, but one fact remained. Only one thing out of the ordinary had happened—the restoration of the pearl necklace by Mr. Sinclair, and on one point in this restoration the stories agreed absolutely. Mr. Sinclair had not been laughing or amused as he returned the necklace. His face had been grave and his manner serious.

LACKING facts, Mary worked on theories. Suppose, she reasoned, the necklace had been stolen and Mr. Sinclair had discovered the theft and then threatened to expose the thief. There now presented itself to the girl a problem which she could not solve, but which her lover solved for her very promptly.

"Suppose," she said to the boy, "your father had discovered a thief in the house, I mean among his guests. What would he have done?"

Dick answered promptly.

"Father would have avoided any scandal," said the boy, "he would have ordered the thief from the house and he would have told that person to get out of the country."

"Your father wouldn't have forgiven it?" asked Mary.

"Under no circumstances," said the boy.

"Then," reasoned the girl, "suppose the thief was in desperate need and realized that your father not only had it in his power to end his career but was planning to do that thing, wouldn't that have been a reason for the murder?"

The young people kissed each other ecstatically. Here, at last, was something definite to work on. If the necklace had been stolen instead of lost, as now seemed possible, there must have been some opportunity for its theft.

Ruth Stoneman, to whom the necklace belonged, had in the meantime married and was at Palm Beach with her husband. Mary followed her there. Her luck still held. The girl had her own theories about the loss of her necklace, suppressed theories which she was glad to air.

Ruth and her husband were sitting on the edge of a float off the shore of Palm Beach, dabbling their feet and legs in the yellowish-green inshore waters of the Florida coast. Mary swam out to them and climbed on the raft. The girls kissed wetly.

"Of course, I remember," said Ruth, when Mary had asked her question, "everybody thought I'd lost that necklace."

She shook her head with a little laugh and glanced quickly with suppressed amusement at her husband.

"But I didn't," she said positively. "It was stolen."

"You're sure of that?" cried Mary breathlessly.

The other girl nodded and rose quickly to her feet. She stood poised on the edge of the raft, her slim white body swaying gently with its undulations, as she looked down at the eager girl beside her.

"How do you know?" asked Mary.

"Because the clasp wasn't broken," said the girl. "And I've always thought," she went on, "that Boris Morton took my pearls."

Before Mary could frame her next question the girl went on, "He's the only man who had a chance."

Suddenly she looked at her husband and laughed.

"I think," she added, "I was a bit squiffy that night and Boris and I petted quite a little in the conservatory."

This declaration was followed by a quick glance at her husband, a giggle of sheer amusement, and then the girl's slim white body made a perfect arc through the air, and still laughing, she disappeared under the water.

Her husband looked at Mary with a little grin of amusement as he murmured, "What a girl!"

Mary was on her feet poised on the edge of the raft.

"Where are you going?" asked the young man.

"Home," crowed Mary, "I'm going home."

And there was another arc of gleaming white flesh as Mary plunged after her friend.

(*To Be Concluded*)

Vampire Furniture

In the eighteenth century a worthy clergyman traveling from one shire of Wales to another put up for the week-end as an honored guest in a farmhouse dating from Tudor days. The present tenant had bought much of the old furniture, and the guest chamber was furnished with it.

The next morning being Saturday, the parson rose early and seating himself by the window read the Bible and meditated over the sermon which he was to deliver in the house on Sunday. When he rose from the chair to go down to breakfast he was amazed to see the back of his hand bleeding. He dipped his hand in the wash-bowl and with some difficulty stopped the flow of blood, puzzled to find what looked like teeth marks rather than a scratch.

He bound his hand with a handkerchief and went down. On being asked by his hostess how he had slept, he said, "Excellently," and, commenting on the antique furniture, added: "But I fear there is a nail in the old chair by the window."

"I must have it seen to," said the hostess, "more than one visitor has complained of having received scratches in that chair."

On Monday morning the visitor was awakened before dawn by a painful sensation which he described as like that of a dog gnawing his flesh. He rose, struck a light, and looking at his side found marks like those on his hand, and the wounds bleeding freely. He attended to himself but said nothing at breakfast. After that meal he went to look at his horse and was horrified to find that the thing which had attacked him had set teethmarks in the neck of the nag. These he bathed. As he said good-by, he related these further experiences, adding that he was afraid a vampire haunted the house, probably a former owner of old furniture, and one ill disposed to the clergy.

"Similar things have happened to two clergymen before, but not to their horses," the hostess unwillingly acknowledged.

Long after this occurrence other visiting clergyman had like experiences, even as late as 1850, when one was bitten on hand and leg. The tenant moving out soon after sold the old furniture, and though at the present day the house is still occupied, that which haunted it has not reappeared.

On the Fifth Night

By J. FRANCIS KING

OLD JACK MANNING, Sheriff of Alton County for more than twenty years, sat behind his dilapidated office desk in the County court-house in Remsen, deeply interested, to judge from all outward appearances, in an article in the Remsen *Daily News*, which he held in both hands, outspread before him.

His two favorite deputies, Joe Colter, young and wiry-looking, and Ed Barry, tall, gaunt, awkward, and of uncertain age, were busy at the opposite end of the ramshackle office at their favorite pastime, that of cleaning and oiling their pet firearms.

The wind rattled almost incessantly the two windows of which the office boasted. Thunder boomed out occasionally, seeming to shake the very foundation of the court-house, to be followed by blinding lightning, which lit up the dark and mud-covered street that served as the main thoroughfare of the town.

The steady tattoo of the rain beating against the window panes was almost drowned by the noise made by the Sheriff as he folded his paper and slammed it down on the desk before him, chuckling heartily the while he did so.

"Lads," said he, glancing at his lieutenants, "I just read a d—d fine account of th' Drayden murder case out in New York. The myst'ry that surrounded th' case has fin'ly been solved by a young whipper-snapper of a crim'nolygist, an' all he had to work on was a bit of a finger-print th' murd'rer left on a piece of broken glass.

"I take off my hat to this lad. He's a youngster, an' he's got started right foot first. Th' case as a whole brings to my mind a little chain o' happ'nin's that I'll never forget."

The deputies, seeing their boss gazing off into space, looked at each other and winked. They knew the symptoms, and, knowing the Sheriff, felt sure that they were in for a treat. For it was on just such nights as this that the story-telling fever seemed to grip Manning. In a moment their hopes were realized.

"Ever tell you th' story 'bout 'Jerry th' Turk,' lads?" asked the Sheriff.

"No, chief, don't think you did," replied Colton. "Let her go."

Manning tilted back his chair, swung his size eight brogans atop the unpolished surface of the desk, puffed a while on a large black cheroot, then, settling down in his chair with a sigh, began:

"Well, it came to pass 'bout twenty year ago, but it's so firmly fixed in my mind that it seems but a few short months have passed since then. This 'Jerry the' Turk' was one of the wickedest an' most feared crim'nals of his time.

"After gettin' by with committin' a series of robb'ries an' killin's that was strung over a period of 'bout eight years, he was fin'ly caught dead bang to rights an' sent up to State Prison for life for havin' killed one of th' finest cops that ever

pounded a pavement. How he 'scaped bein' hung, I don't know.

"They say he was worth a young fortune in blood money, though, when he was 'rested, so maybe th' life 'bit' ain't so very strange, for that reason.

"He was wicked, a born killer; but also he was one of the han'somest devils I ever laid eyes on—fine-lookin' in a dark way. I was down at the State Prison th' day they brought him in, havin' taken down a hoss thief for a little sojourn at th' State's expense.

"WHEN th' Turk hove in sight, with eight burly deppities guardin' him, I near fell through th' floor. I run over to th' door when he stepped in, walkin' kind o' proud like an' straight as a Injun prince, an' started to grab his hand. For, lads, I'd 'a' sworn on a stack o' Bibles as high as th' ceilin' that th' Turk was my friend, Big Joe McShaney, assistant chief deppity at th' prison.

"He was th' dead spit o' Big Joe—eyes, hair, nose, face, build 'n' ever'thin', an' as fine a spec'men o' healthy manhood as you ever looked at, 'bout six foot two of solid bone an' muscle, an' 'bout a year younger than Big Joe, who was thirty at th' time. I'm a-tellin' you I never saw such a strikin' resemblance before or since.

"When I reached out to grab his hand a couple of th' deppities grabbed *me*, not knowin' who I was, an' I had a heluva time a-tryin' to convince 'em I wasn't tryin' to turn th' Turk loose.

"An' while we're argyin' back an' forth Big Joe himself steps in th' office, an' you should 'a' seen th' faces o' them depps. They looked like they was struck by lightnin', an' the only way they could tell which of th' two was their prisoner was by th' bracelets on his wrists.

"Th' Turk an' Big Joe took one long look at each other, an' right then an' there was born a mutual hatred for each other that th' pair of them carried to their graves.

"Joe came out of th' trance first. He smiled a queer smile of contempt an' said, 'So *you're* th' Turk, eh?'

"The Turk gives him a look that carried th' deadliest poison in it an' sneers, but don't say a word. He was a pretty silent gent by reppitation, anyway.

"Well, lads, from that day on th' Turk served some d—d tough time at th' 'Big House.' He was made to do all th' filthiest an' hardest jobs that could be found. Big Joe said he was tryin' to break th' Turk's spirit, an' he sure tried every way he knew of doin' jus' that. An' Joe's hatred seemed to grow as time went on. He got so that every night he'd sit up an' plan how to make th' Turk's life more miserable th' follow'in' day.

"The Turk resented it all at first, but after a few trips to th' dungeon, on a diet o' bread an' water, for charges o' insolence, refusin' to work, an' such like, he seemed to change. He began to curry favor from Big Joe.

"When he failed in this, he went to work on th' warden, an' succeeded in gettin' him to ask Joe to let up a little on his enemy. But Joe told the warden th' Turk was one of the worst bad men in th' prison an' that he bore close watchin', an' continued to ride him.

"Joe's people hailed from down Florida way. An' when his mother took sick he got a week's vacation to visit her. While he was gone th' Turk got the warden to give him a soft job in th' 'yard gang,' where he was out in th' open ten hours a day. He worked at his new job just three days.

"On' th' third day he grabbed a

twenty-foot plank, planted it against th' wall, an' started over th' top. He went over all right, an' no doubt would 'a' got en away, as there was a tourin' car ready for him two blocks away, but one of th' guards on th' wall shot him in the hip as he landed outside th' wall.

"He was brought back in th' prison an', after his wound was patched up, thrown in th' dungeon on bread an' water. Big Joe came back th' next day. He told me how he lorded it over th' warden for havin' let th' Turk fool him. By this time th' warden was only too ready to believe anythin' Joe told him about his enemy. An' he gave Joe orders to ride th' Turk jus' as hard as he knew how.

"This was music to Joe's ears. He went right down to th' dungeon an' b'gan to torment th' prisoner, by tellin' him some of th' *nice* jobs he was goin' to have waitin' for him when he came out of solitary confinement. Then th' Turk cut loose on Joe. He called him every vile name he could think of an' wound up by makin' him a promise.

" 'McShaney,' he said, 'you been tryin' to make my life a hell on earth since I been here. You got th' whip hand over me now, an' you're havin' *your* day. That's O. K. But I'm makin' you a promise here an' now (an' anyone who knows me will tell you I ain't ever been known to break a promise), that some day I'm goin' to 'beat' this joint. An' I promise you that *five days after I leave here you'll be a dead man.* I'll go further an' say that *you'll die on th' fifth night after I'm out of here!* That's all I got to say, you dirty, big, puddin'-head hound, you!'

"Well, lads, Joe didn't tell me what he did then, but I imagine th' Turk kind o' went to sleep for a spell. Anyway, when Joe was tellin' me this he sure was shook up about it. He said, 'Jack, that Turk is a *devil,* an' he'll sure keep that promise if he ever gets th' chance.'

"SO it ain't at all strange then that Joe kept a pretty keen eye on his man when he came out of th' dungeon, which he did a few months later. An' what I mean, Joe sure rode him *hard!* An' he passed the word down th' line to the rest of th' guards to 'rub it in' on him also.

"But th' Turk didn't seem to mind it a bit. He took it all with a smile; an', occasionally, when he happened to be alone with Joe, he'd say, kind o' sarcastic-like, 'I'll be bailin' myself out one of these days, McShaney.' Then he'd laugh.

"Well, he did bail himself out. How he done it all come out later. By doin' a lot o' wire-pullin' with some crooked politicians he got a pal o' his, by name o' Shea, a job as a guard at th' prison. This Shea worked as an extra guard for 'bout three months. Durin' that time he studied all Big Joe's actions an' habits while Joe was on duty, an' reported all he learned daily to th' Turk, without anyone bein' th' wiser.

"After Shea learned all he wanted to know about Big Joe he was mysteriously transferred to th' night shift of guards.

"A month or so after this change was made he went on duty in th' wing where th' Turk was locked up.

"One fine mornin' this Shea is found by his relief guard bound an' gagged in his chair with a nasty gash on th' side o' his head. Three o' th' bars o' th' Turk's cell was found sawed out, an' two o' th' bars of a window on th' side of th' wing facin' th' street was also sawed. An' th' Turk had left durin' th' night for parts unknown. In his cell he left a little note addressed to Big Joe, tellin' him he'd keep his promise.

"A state-wide search was imme-

diately made for th' 'scaped man. Posses s c o u r e d th' countryside around th' prison. Th' best sleuths in th' State was put on th' job. Posters with th' Turk's picture an' finger-prints on 'em was shipped to police headquarters throughout th' country, an' every cop within ten mile of th' prison was handed a poster with orders to shoot first an' talk later, if they run across him. They might jus' as well been huntin' th' devil himself for all th' success they had.

"There was a great to-do at th' prison investigation concernin 'th' 'scape. All this Shea would say was that he had been hit on th' head from behind 'bout an hour after he'd gone on duty. That's all he knew. He was suspended, o' course, an' disappeared.

"Th' four days followin' th' 'scape was a hell on earth for Big Joe. Th' warden begged him to take a vacation, for it was then common knowledge at th' prison that th' Turk had promised to murder him. But Joe insisted on stickin' at his post.

"For four days he had a body guard of two of th' most trustworthy guards at th' prison. They dogged his footsteps wherever he went durin' th' day. They escorted him home at night an' was relieved by three other guards, who stood watch over him all night.

"On th' fifth day Joe's guard was strengthened, when he abs'lut'ly refused to listen to th' warden's advice that he change his lodgin's for that night. He kidded th' warden along, tellin' him th' Turk was like th' rest of th' men who left th' prison; that he thought too much of his new-found liberty to j'op'rdize it by tryin' to do a fool thing like carry out his crazy promise. He was treatin' it all as a big joke.

"But, nevertheless, that n i g h t there was five guards on duty to protect his life. One of 'em was stationed on th' ground beneath Joe's bedroom window, one outside each of th' two bedroom doors, an' two others doin' patrol duty around th' house.

"We'll leave 'em in jus' that position, lads, an' take up th' tale from th' Turk's end of it.

"WHEN th' Turk 'scaped, he was met outside th' prison by two of his pals (their names was never known to a n y o n e but th' Turk), who hustled him off in a car to an apartment rented in town a few weeks before. They kept him comp'ny for four days' an' on th' fifth, at his bidding, left him.

"Th' Turk's apartment was across th' street from th' two-story house in which Big Joe lived alone, occupyin' three rooms on th' second floor. (Joe's rooms was taken care of by th' housekeeper who lived on th' ground floor.)

"On th' second day after th' 'scape one of th' Turk's pals, followin' his chosen profession, entered Big Joe's rooms, unnoticed, an' reported back to th' Turk with inf'mation concernin' th' lay of th' land an' other pertic'lers he was hankerin' t' know about.

"An' when, on th' mornin' of th' fifth day, th' Turk, from his window, saw th' housekeeper leave th' house bound on a shoppin' tour, he crossed th' street, an' with th' aid of a master skeleton key, entered Joe's flat prepared for any obstacle he might meet.

"He went right to Joe's bedroom an' located th' trap door in th' ceilin' which led to an unused attic. This trap door was secured by a heavy padlock set in a hasp attached to th' ceilin'. A hinge like you see on the sea chests was used to connect with th' face of th' door.

"Th' Turk, usin' a very fine, pli-

able saw, at once set to work cuttin' through th' door, makin' a triangle-shaped cut along th' border of th' hinge. This done, th' hinge came loose an' dangled from th' ceilin', bein' held up by th' lock.

"Takin' out a screw on th' hinge, he inserted a long thin nail, th' same thickness as th' screw, in its place, drivin' it in almost noiselessly with a leather-headed hammer he brought along for this purpose. When th' nail was driv'n in to its head, it stuck out more'n an inch on th' other side. This part th' Turk bent double, shapin' it like a hook. Openin' th' door, he hooked up a neat little rope ladder, soiled th' surface of th' sawed edge so's it wouldn't show, an' cleaned up th' mess he'd made.

"After a careful look aroun' th' room he clum th' ladder. Reachin' th' attic, he hauled up th' ladder an' closed th' door. He then reached through th' hole he'd made an' hauled up th' loose end of th' hinge. Drawin' this in place, he stuck a small file through th' hook he'd made of th' bent nail. This held th' hinge in its proper place, an' th' Turk felt sure that no one from below would tumble to what he'd done. After oilin' the hinges of th' door, he looked over th' attic, lightin' his way with a pocket flash, an' fin'ly settled down on a cross beam a few feet from th' trap.

"In this way he waited. About seven o'clock he heard Big Joe an' his guards enter downstairs. After a careful search of th' rooms they entered th' bedroom. The Turk was list'nin' in on their conv'sation while they was exam'nin' th' clothes closet, lookin' under th' bed an' in th' double-sized trunk in one corner of th' room.

"Fin'ly one of 'em asks what's th' trap door in th' ceilin'. Big Joe tells him, 'That leads to an unused attic, an' as it's locked with a heavy lock, as you can see, th' only way anyone could enter through it would be by comin' through th' roof. Even then they'd never be able to get through th' trap without wakin' me up!

"BUT th' guards wanted to make double sure no one had tried to come thru th' roof. So they went, by way of th' skylight, up on top of th' roof, and examined it. Findin' ever'thin' ship-shape they come back to th' bedroom. They was five of them besides Joe. Th' two that was to patrol around th' house left immediately to do so.

"The other three played cards with Joe 'till aroun' ten o'clock. One of 'em then went down an' took his post outside th' house below Joe's bedroom window. Th' other two who had been on guard over Joe all day had th' easiest jobs. They stationed themselves, seated in chairs, outside th' two bedroom doors, which was locked.

"Big Joe went to bed right away although he was pretty sure he wouldn't fall asleep. Every half hour th' guards would call in thru th' door to find out if Joe was sleepin'. At two o'clock their call wasn't answered, so they unlocked th' doors an' findin' Joe was asleep, returned to their posts.

"Th' Turk was thankful to th' guards for their thoughtfulness (as he put it) for lettin' him know when his prey was asleep. At three o'clock he made his first move, figurin' Joe was then sound asleep, as there had not been a sound from below since th' guards last left th' room.

"Noiselessly he eased th' file, which held th' hinge in place, loose. Settin' it to one side he let down th' sawed-off hinge till it dangled from th' hasp. Th' trap door opened

soundlessly, thanks to his havin' oiled up th' rusty hinges.

"His eyes was long since used to th' darkness, an' when he looked down, an' a few feet to one side, below him, he spotted Big Joe láyin' on his left side, his head facin' th' other way.

"Securin' his rope ladder in place he eased it thru th' openin' till th' loose end rested on th' floor. There wasn't even a faint creak as he went down th' ladder in his stockin' feet, shoes in hand.

"When he hit th' floor, his first act was to go to th' two doors, in turn, an' listen. At th' first door he heard quite musical snores. He smiled, then laid a han'kerch'f over th' door knob so's no one could see thru th' key-hole, an' went to th' second one. Hearin' deep breathin' he inwa'dly thanked th' outside guards for lettin' these two who had worked all day have th' soft jobs. Placin' another han'kerch'f over th' knob of this door he turned his attention elsewhere.

"Takin' th' leather-headed hammer from his pocket, he approached th' bed. Towerin' over his sleepin' enemy, he picked out a spot, just behin' th' right ear, drew back his powerful arm an' let go a blow that had behin' it, besides superhuman strength, a deadly poisonous hatred of long standin'.

"Th' hammer went home to its target with a dull thud. Big Joe jus' groaned a bit, an' went limp. Th' Turk, with murderous eyes blazin', stood there tense, every nerve high-strung to detect th' slightest foreign sound that'd turn him into a crazed killer. An' when a few secon's went draggin' by with no sound but his own quick breathin', he smiled an' set about his work.

"STEPPIN' over to th' double-size trunk near th' window he opened th' lid an' found it pract'ly empty. He returned to th' bed, stuck th' hammer in his pocket, an' p'ceeded to strip Joe of his underwear. This done, he gagged his victim effic'ntly an' bound him han' an' foot. Pickin' up Joe's unconscious form he carried him across th' room an' gently set him to rest in th' trunk.

"He shook Joe an' worked over him for several minutes to bring him to. Th' window shade was lowered so he didn't bother to screen th' rays of his flashlight as it played over Joe's body. Then, seein' Joe's terror-stricken eyes fly open, he turned th' ray of his flash on his own face an' smiled.

"Bendin' over he whispered in Joe's ear: 'McShaney, I'm keepin' my promise. I'd have killed you sooner only I wanted to be punctual, —also to let you *know* you was dyin', an' what for. For th' way you rode me, McShaney, th' most torturous death I could think of would be too d—d good for you. My only regret is that I got to bump you off qui'tly. Otherwise I'd burn you at th' stake, you *snake!*'

"He then took from his pocket a hyp'dermic s'ringe an' a vi'l containin' a liquid mixture of two grains of heroin. One grain, he knew, would kill a strong man. He simply wanted to make double sure of his work.

"As he filled th' hypo an' turned his flash so it'd play over Joe's left shoulder, th' victim's eyes began to roll, beggin' vainly for mercy. Joe tried to talk till th' veins in his face an' neck stood out like purple welts, as though they'd burst. He couldn't utter a sound.

"Th' Turk sat there lookin' at him an' askin' him if he couldn't take his medicine like a man. Then, takin' hold of Joe's upper left arm in his left hand, th' Turk pinched it until a large vein showed an', chucklin', he druv th' needle into th' center of th' vein.

"Joe strained at his bonds with every atom of strength in his body. An' as he squirmed an' twisted, th' Turk savagely shot th' plunger home, em'tyin' th' s'ringeful of drug into Joe's arm without spillin' a drop. Pullin' out th' hypo he dropped it into his pocket an' began rubbin' Joe's arm.

"In a moment all color left Joe's face. Sweat began to pour off his face an' body an' his eyes stuck out like they was about to pop loose from their sockets. An' th' Turk jus' sat there on th' edge of th' trunk, his eyes drinkin' in th' sight of his mortal en'my's agony. Joe's struggles soon ceased an', with one great convulsive shudder, his life candle went out.

"Th' Turk quickly snatched at his hand, feelin' in vain for his pulse beat. Takin' out a pocket mirror he placed it before Joe's lips an' a minute later turned th' light on it. Not a speck of moisture showed. Th' Turk sighed. His work for th' *night* was finished. He had now to prepare for his final deed.

"TAKIN' off all his clothes he donned Joe's underwear—then th' rest of Joe's clothes to see if they fit him. Everythin' but th' shoes fit to a "T." So, settin' his own shoes aside, he undressed again an' wrapped his clothes in a bundle with Joe's shoes an' dumped 'em in th' trunk on top of Joe.

"He then took down his ladder an' put that, too, in th' trunk. Standin' on a chair he succeeded in placin' th' sawed-out hinge back in its place in th' trap door, securin' it in place by stickin' two match sticks in th' crevices. After removin' th' two handkerch'fs from th' door knobs he threw them into th' trunk, closed th' lid an' snapped th' lock almost noiselessly.

"He then went caref'lly over th' room with th' flash to see that nothin' had been overlooked. Satisfied that ever'thin' was ship-shape, he crawled into bed an' in a few minutes was sleepin' th' sleep of th' peaceful with Joe's corpse, hardly yet cold, not ten feet from him.

"At six o'clock he was awakened by th' guards who congrat'lated him on havin' lived through th' night. Speakin' hoarsely, which he explained away by sayin' he had caught a cold durin' th' night, he in turn congrat'lated th' guards on havin' kept watch over him so well.

"He dismissed th' two guards who had been on duty at his bedroom doors, an' one of th' others After a light bre'kf'st brought up to him by th' housekeeper from downstairs, th' Turk an' his two bodyguards set out for th' prison in Joe's car, which th' Turk drove.

"Ent'rin' th' prison, th' Turk at once dismissed th' two remainin' guards, tellin' them he'd decide on what he'd do for protection after he'd seen th' warden. Thanks to th' inf'mation his friend Shea had given him, he went d'rectly to Joe's locker, changed his clothes an' then relieved Bill Rutter, th' deppity in charge of th' night shift, an' took his place behind th' desk in th' Center, th' large room so called because th' whole prison is built aroun' it, bein' like th' hub of a wheel an' th' prison wings an' buildin's like th' wheel spokes juttin' out from it.

"Th' warden hadn't yet appeared, nor had th' Chief Deppity or th' other officials. They didn't come on duty until after nine o'clock, as a rule. To th' oncomin' an' offgoin' guards, th' Turk spoke gruffly, appearin' to be in rather an ill mood which these men attrib'ted to th' long strain 'Joe' had been under.

"Th' first of th' officials to greet him was Tom Mulvaney, a youngster in charge of th' Prison Ident'fication

Bureau. He was famil'arly known as th' 'Finger Print Bug.' Fingerprints, you know, was jus' beginnin' to come into their own at that time an' this Mulvaney was sure crazy over 'em.

"Only a month before this he had gotten permiss'n from th' warden to take th' fingerprints of all th' officials an' employees at th' prison. An' when he got 'em he went off on a spree by comparin' th' prints with those of th' inmates. But th' officials didn't mind. They figured Tom, though a good man in his line, was a bit cracked, an' they humored him.

"As I said before, he came into th' prison about a quarter of eight, jus' when th' men was all settled for th' day, th' workin' men at work an' th' idle men locked up in their cells after bre'kf'st. Tom called in thru th' barred door sep'ratin' th' Center from th' front off'ces, to th' Turk, kiddin' him 'bout th' ordeal he'd been thru th' night b'fore.

"Th' Turk explained that th' only ordeal he'd been thru was that of catchin' a cold so that he was hoarse, an' he said that th' Turk was like th' rest of th' imb'ciles that was in th' prison; once they got outside th' walls they become slightly normal again an' forgot th' institution an' th' rough deals they'd been thru.

"WHEN Mulvaney left him th' Turk glanced at the large clock on th' wall. It was five minutes to eight. In thirty-five minutes th' Turk would set in motion his final move. It was th' fulfillin' of another promise of which th' prison officials was ign'rant. He leaned on th' desk, goin' over in his mind for th' twent'th time th' details of his next move.

"Ten minutes after Mulvaney left him he had th' clerk in th' tel'phone office to one side of th' center desk make out tickets for two men—Charles (Chuck) Riley an' John (Jabber) Griffin. These slips, sent to these two men, would enable them to pass to th' Center unm'lested. These men, two of th' most notorious crim'nals in th' prison, an' th' only men th' Turk had anythin' to do with while he was there, was th' two th' Turk had made his second promise to. That promise was *liberty.*

"Jus' as th' clerk handed him th' two filled-in slips, Mulvaney entered th' Center, an' comin' behin' th' desk, said, 'Here you are, Joe. I want to see these two men. Sign th' slips for them at once, will you?' and he handed him two slips.

"For th' first time since he had 'scaped, th' Turk was flustered. Th' re'lization that there was one point that he'd overlooked flashed to his mind an' he turned a trifle pale. For he couldn't, under such a stern eye as Tom Mulvaney's, sign Joe's name, *as he hadn't th' least idea what Joe's signature looked like.*

"Tellin' Mulvaney that he'd be with him in a minute he laid th' four slips on th' desk an' abs'ntmindedly picked up a pencil an' walked toward th' little office to one side of th' desk. His mind was workin' like lightnin' to dope a way out. He was jus' stallin' for time an' wanted Mulvaney out of th' way, if possible. Then like a flash th' s'lution of his problem come to him.

"Steppin' into th' little office he took Joe's pearl-handled pocket knife an' began sharp'nin' his pencil holdin' th' knife in his left han'. Seein' that th' clerk's attention was d'rected elsewhere, he gave a sharp slash, let out a nasty curse an' dropped both knife an' pencil to th' floor. Turnin' he hustled out of th' room snappin' his right han' to shake off th' blood that began to run freely from th' gash he'd given himself across th' upper joints of his thumb an' index finger.

"When he reached th' desk he had drawn out a han'kerch'f an' was soppin' up th' blood with it when Mulvaney asked him what th' trouble was.

" 'Tryin' to sharpen a pencil with that d—d knife instead of usin' th' pencil-sharpener an' slashed myself,' said th' Turk. He then had Mulvaney tie th' han'kerch'f across th' knuckles of his han', but th' blood still oozed out an' run down his thumb. Mulvaney told him to get some i'dine in th' office an' apply it.

"Th' Turk grumbled somethin' to himself an' takin' th' four slips in his *right hand*, gave 'em to th' official, sayin', 'Here, you better sign all four of 'em an' get 'em underway as soon as poss'ble as I can't write at all now,' an' hustled off t' th' office for th' i'dine.

"Mulvaney set th' slips down on th' desk an' takin' up a pencil started to sign th' top one. As he did so he glanced at th' upper corner of th' slip which was smeared with a thumb print of blood. He chuckled, an' bein' a bug where finger-prints was concerned, bent lower to get a better view of 'Joe's' print.

"What he saw well nigh turned him to stone. He stiffened an' stared with poppin' eyes at th' print. Th' blood in his whole body seemed to chill all at once. For with his naked eye he immediately reco'nized th' most peculiar thumb print he had ever seen.

"He had come across it only five days before when makin' up ident'fication cards an' pictures of th' Turk, to send to police headquarters in various cities of th' country with th' hope of bringin' 'bout th' Turk's capture. This print had an S-shaped scar zig-zaggin' across th' nail of th' thumb. An' Mulvaney at once reco'nized it as th' Turk's.

"HE was at first so dumfounded that he could not move. Then, grad-u'ly th' whole thing become clear to him. This man was not Joe McShaney, for Joe's thumb print was unmarred by any scar. He was th' Turk, fillin' Joe's shoes. Joe had been done away with, murdered, no doubt, an' th' Turk was there in his place.

"Why? Why was th' Turk there? If he had murdered Joe why hadn't he flown? All these things flew like mad through his brain. It took him more than a minute to steady his jumpin' nerves so that he could sign th' slips. Even then his hand trembled vi'lently as he did sign 'em.

"As he signed th' last two slips he noted th' names. Griffin an' Riley. Th' two worst char'cters in th' jail. He began to see th' light. These two men was th' Turk's pals while he was in th' jail. He was sendin' for them for a reason, an' no good one. They was both lifers. Was it poss'ble he was goin' t' try t' turn 'em out? he asked himself. It must be.

"Then he, Mulvaney, had better get busy. Callin' to th' Turk that th' slips was signed an' on their way t' th' wings, he gave *three* of 'em to a Center runner to d'liver, an' hustled off to his own office with th' thumb-printed one. One look at th' print, through a glass, proved all he had guessed. He then quickly compared th' print with one on which th' Turk's picture was printed, th' iden-t'f'cation card. They was alike.

"He leaped to th' phone an' called th' warden who lived across th' street from th' jail. In a few words he told him th' Turk was at th' jail masq'radin' as McShaney an', he thought, ready to pull off a jail d'liv-'ry in a few minutes, takin' Riley an' Griffin with him.

"Warden Holp gasped. He was still in bed an' thought he was dreamin'. So he made Mulvaney repeat it all. When he did, th' warden,

who was by no means slow-witted, had his orders ready.

"'Hold him up as long as you can, Tom,' said he, 'I'll s'round th' jail. It'd be madness t' try t' take him from inside th' prison. We'll nail him as he leaves. I'll keep th' wire open, an' no more than he starts for th' door, let me know so that I can pass th' word along.'

"Th' warden, then, usin' a second telephone, called th' State Police headquarters an' ordered all th' men avail'ble to come t' th' prison an' s'round it, makin' known his reasons for doin' so. He next called th' nearest station house an' did likewise, tellin' th' Chief of Police to keep his men well out of sight.

"In three minutes a squad of fourteen detectives an' cops was scattered in hallways an' alleys across from th' front entrance to th' jail. Two minutes later forty-five troopers arrived an' lined up aroun' th' prison alongside th' outer walls an' buildin's. Th' Chief of Police an' th' head of th' troopers, after a hasty talk with th' warden, picked five of their men to line up on either side of th' main entrance close to th' buildin'.

"At eight-thirty sharp th' Turk, with unbandaged hand in his coat pocket firmly holdin' a forty-five Colts automatic, an' left hand danglin' at his side in close reach of a second gun, ushered his pals Riley an' Griffin, who was in prison clothes, through th' centre gate an' toward th' front door. As they passed Mulvaney's office he shot a quick order over th' wire to th' warden, who bounded to th' window of his room an' flagged th' danger signal to th' men waitin' outside.

"Approachin' th' door guard, Bill Ermine, th' Turk said softly, 'Bill, I'm takin' these two men across th' street to work in th' warden's garage!' Bill paled a little an', trem'lin', swung open th' door. Th' Turk stepped back an' said, 'All right, boys, go ahead.' As they started down th' steps th' Turk fell in behind 'em, both his hands on his guns. He had taken but three steps when a voice at his left rung out, 'Halt! in th' name of th' law, or you're dead men!'

"Riley an' Griffin jumped for th' car that was waitin' at th' curb to take 'em away. Th' Turk turned sidewise an' leaped in th' direction from which th' voice came. As he leaped his guns swung into sight, an', snarlin' like a madman, he began t' em'ty 'em at th' two men whose forms he saw duck under cover not ten feet away. At his first fire a fus'lade of shots rang out behind him from th' men posted on th' other side of th' entrance, an' he pitched forward on th' sidewalk, face down, an' lay still.

"Griffin an' Riley unarmed, tried desp'rat'ly to start Joe McShaney's car. In a trice they were s'rounded an' gave up without a struggle.

"That, lads, is th' story of 'Jerry th' Turk.'"

"They killed him instantly, eh, Chief?" asked Barry.

"No," replied the Sheriff. "He got four slugs in him, two in th' right shoulder, one in th' back of th' neck, an' one which settled in his lungs. He lived 'bout eighteen hours. Before he kicked off he confessed to 'bout a dozen murders an' gave th' details of his 'scape, which made this story poss'ble. His last words was a plea to th' warden to go as easy as poss'ble on Riley an' Griffin, as he said he led 'em into tryin' to 'scape.

"An', lads, every time I hear anyone knockin' th' finger-print system of crime detection, I think of th' Turk an' want to knock down th' man who's doin' th' knockin'."

Ghosts I Never Met

By WOLCOTT LeCLEAR BEARD

A Special Feature Article

WHEN we all were children, and our elders smugly assured us that "there's no such thing as a ghost," some of us even then were inclined to wonder how those elders, who professed to believe in the Bible, could thus implicitly deny certain things that are plainly written there.

At that tender age we couldn't be expected to understand that our opinions, no less than our clothing, are ordered by fashion, and that a decree of fashion had banished the ghost from polite Victorian society.

Long before the sponsorship of a few scientists had restored the ghost to a measure of respectability there were, however, a few sincere ghost-hunters to be found in almost every community. Not spiritists, be it understood; merely people who earnestly desired to prove that world-wide traditions of the ages cannot be wholly untrue.

What follows is the chronicle, incomplete but unembellished, of such a quest—one which sometimes seemed to reach the very verge of success, but never wholly succeeded.

THE quest began when I still was a small boy, and started, as one might say, of its own accord. It was probably owing to this latter fact that I have been largely immune from the horrible, unreasoning terror of the unknown which sometimes will fasten its grip even upon men who otherwise are brave to desperation. It would have been an abnormally timorous boy, I think, who could be frightened by "The Lady's Train."

It haunted the halls of the Tenth Street Studio Building, the oldest structure of its kind in New York, where my grandfather and father had occupied studios from days that preceded the Civil War. That is all that ever was seen; just the train of a woman's gown that would whisk out of sight around the many corners of those tortuous, echoing corridors.

That much, however, was seen, always in broad daylight, unnumbered times and by unnumbered people. For me to try to stalk that lady, or to entrap her and thus get a sight of her face and form, became a fascinating game that lasted for years. For what she looked like, who she was and why she was there are mysteries that are unsolved still.

Many years afterward another and very different presence made itself manifest to me in that old building. It was supposed to be that of a certain artist, a famous National Academician in his day. His portrait, painted by my grandfather, now hangs on the walls of the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, but the subject was comparatively young when that picture was made.

I remember him as an old, old man, with a long, white beard, pottering about with steps that were feeble, yet nervously quick. He died, insane, during my early childhood. I was a man grown when I heard those footsteps again.

This first happened, I recall, late one night when I was returning from some festivity and met my friend, Harper Pennington, the portrait painter, likewise homeward bound,

on the outer doorstep. He asked me to stop in for a smoke and a talk before going to bed; and chatting as we went, we entered the building and started on our way upstairs.

Now, there was nothing in the universe, at that time, more foreign to our minds than any thought of the long-dead artist to whom I have referred. Personally I had not recollected him, or anything concerning him, for years, and had even forgotten that Pennington's studio was the one that he had formerly occupied.

Our conversation concerned itself with the *Valkyrie's* chance of winning the coming yacht races. Yet even so, we could not help but hear the footsteps of another man that followed us along the winding corridor and up the stairs.

Naturally, when we heard these sounds, we stopped and turned. The corridor was lighted; there was no one to be seen except ourselves. But the third man still could be heard, for our sudden halt apparently was unexpected by him, and he took a hesitating step or two before he could bring himself to a stand. We moved on, and once more the footsteps followed us, across the threshold of the studio and into the room itself.

There they stopped. Pennington addressed our invisible and uninvited guest, and in his most winning tones —anyone who knew him will remember how winning they could be—offered any assistance in our power, if only that unseen presence would in some way let us know how we could be of service.

But it couldn't let us know, or wouldn't; at any rate, it didn't. And so that particular incident was closed. Another, constantly recurring, at once began.

ON the following day, and for a long period thereafter, something would knock at the studio door. There was nothing in the character or the circumstances of those knocks to suggest the spirit rappings, so-called, that are heard in "seances." Quite the contrary.

These always were heard during a painter's working hours, which of course are the brightest of the twenty-four. Sometimes several days would pass without them; sometimes they were heard several times in one day and always were heard by several people. Pennington, unlike most artists, never could work comfortably unless he was surrounded by chattering friends, of whom I generally was one.

They always were the same—a series of sharp, insistent raps; raps that might be made by an impatient man, eager to be admitted.

At first, when we heard these knocks, one of us would hasten to open the door. There never was anyone there; and for any practical joker to knock and escape undetected was absolutely impossible.

Once, being about to leave the room, my hand was on the knob when those knocks were heard. I jerked the door open instantly. The results, or lack of them, were the same; no one was there.

Inevitably, of couse, this phenomenon caused much discussion for a time among the habitués of that studio, and it was in the course of these discussions that the studio's former occupant was recalled to mind. After a while, however, we became accustomed to it, as men, given time, will become accustomed to almost anything; and recognizing the rap, no longer would trouble to open the door, but passed it by with perhaps a word of laughing comment.

So the months went on. Summer came, and Pennington left town, first giving me the key of his studio, so that I might use his place if occasion

required; and very soon the occasion arose.

My own quarters were infested by a lot of friends holding high revel which I did not share. Therefore, leaving them in full possession, and taking a blanket with me, I bedded myself down on one of the many divans in Pennington's studio, with a sigh of relief at having escaped that jovial crowd, and prepared to sleep.

Sleep, however, I could not. I had escaped from the noise of song and laughter, it is true, but only to encounter other noises more disturbing still. That is, the sound of footsteps made by a man whom I could not see, even after I lighted the gas; footsteps feeble, yet nervously quick, which brought back my recollection to a period so remote that my head still was decorated with ringlets, which even then I abhorred.

Quite unaffected by the gaslight, equally invisible in light or in darkness, the being whose footsteps I heard pottered about the studio. It moved canvases that were not there. It passed freely into and out of another and smaller room, adjoining the one in which I lay, regardless of the fact that the connecting door was screwed fast and the outer door not only locked but padlocked besides, while the tenant was spending the summer in England.

Many times that being—or whatever it might be—passed within reach of my arm. Once, after a good deal of hesitation, I stretched out my hand to touch it. I expected to feel only a draught of cold air which, according to what I had read, is usually felt in such circumstances. But I felt nothing, not even that.

Once I mustered up courage enough to address the long-dead old man by name, telling him who I was, and repeating Pennington's offer of assistance. This time I was not disappointed. I expected no answer and received none. Unheeding, the footsteps shuffled here and there as before, until, just before daybreak, they ceased.

Who or what made those footsteps? There was no doubt that I heard them, or that I was awake, sane and sober at the time. And as I heard those sounds, why couldn't I see the maker? But these are only two of many similar questions that I never have been able to find answers for, and perhaps never will.

ANOTHER experience is connected in my mind with the foregoing for one reason alone; it also occurred within the limits of the United States. In all other respects, however, they were as unlike as two experiences of this nature well could be. Their respective locales were in themselves enough to ensure a wide variation, for one, as has been said, was in New York City and the other in the heart of the Arizona desert, just north of the Mexican line.

As one of the assistant engineers in the employ of a vast irrigation project then under construction, I was surveying what might, in paradoxical fashion, be defined as a vast, anhydrous watershed.

A tiny oasis that appeared in our path toward the end of one blistering day, like an emerald-green island in that waterless sea of burning sand, was welcomed by my desert-weary gang as though it were a glimpse of paradise. Even the horses, jaded though they were by the long, hot trek from our last camp, pricked their ears and quickened their steps of their own accord as they sensed the green pasture before them.

Best of all, as we came closer, we could see a little adobe house, evidently tenantless, nestling among the bushes. Its style of architecture, common in that country, was that commonly known as the "saddle-

bags," or "two-pens-and-a-passage" sort. It consisted, in brief, of two single-room houses built side by side, eight feet or thereabouts apart, with doors that faced each other and one roof covering the whole, including the space between them. This one was in nearly perfect condition; yet, when I reached the oasis, I found one of my men, who had pushed ahead of the rest, examining it with a doubtful frown.

"I thought this campin' place must be too good to be true," he said, pessimistically, as I approached. "Now I'm sure of it. There's a catch in it somewhere. I don't know what it is, but one can see its marks, and can make a good guess, maybe."

The marks, as he said, were plain to be seen; but the guess that he made, and with which the rest of us concurred, was notably inaccurate.

The marks to which he pointed were those of bullets. Around the two little windows—and nowhere else—the adobe walls were pitted so thickly that the spots were like those on a freckled nose. They had gnawed out the sashes until only a few grooved and splintered remnants were left.

At the time it seemed that only one explanation was possible. The oasis would be a natural stopping-place for cattle rustlers, smugglers and other predatory animals of a more or less human variety. Naturally, also, it would attract those who prey upon them. Inevitably this condition of affairs would lead to blazing guns and flying lead. So there you were.

THIS conclusion in no way discouraged us. Well armed as we were, we could have held that adobe cabin against almost any force that did not have field artillery to aid it. Therefore, after setting a watch over the picketed horses and another to guard our equipment, parked in one of the cabin's two rooms, we spread our blankets in the other room and went to sleep.

It was long since I had slept between four walls, and after a while the chorus of snores in that confined space—at least, I suppose it was that chorus—woke me and kept me awake. Rising, I stole softly out of the room, and going to the end of the open passage, stood there, looking out over the desert that seemed to stretch away so far that it must reach half way around the world.

Within my view there were square miles of land that probably had not been pressed by a human foot since the dawn of European history. A full moon, shining on the desert as it shines nowhere else on earth, hung so low that it seemed to be well within rifle range. It lent the vast plain a beauty that was awesome, and by that very beauty it emphasized horribly the utter desolation.

Any sound could have been heard for an incredible distance, anything that stirred could be seen as far as the eyes could reach; but save for those snores, now muffled by the walls that enclosed the snorers, there was no sound, and nowhere did anything stir, not even the air.

To all appearances the world was as dead, and as lovely in its death, as the planet that floated in the blue satin sky above. The silence and the mystery began to get on my nerves—nerves of which I had scarcely realized the existence before that night. I longed for something—anything—that would move or make a real noise. And then——

"Crash! Crash! Crash!" Three pistol shots, magnified by the cabin walls, sounded like the reports of a heavy shotgun in that great stillness. An oath that was half a shriek of horror followed them, and was followed by two shots more.

Snatching up their weapons, the

men who had been sleeping scrambled out of their blankets, and we all ran to the room in which our goods were stored, from which the sounds had come.

It was the guard who fired those shots. He was a veteran "mule-skinner" who had left Montana, it was rumored, on account of an unpleasantness involving the demise of a deputy sheriff. He was as matter-of-fact a sort of person as one's mind could conceive and certainly no man who lived the life that he did could be either a weakling or a coward.

Yet, as he stood there in the lantern light, his sweat-beaded face had gone pale as death under its coat of tan, and the hand that still held his smoking pistol was trembling.

"There—at that winder!" he cried, before we had time to ask a question. "Some galoot started to get in."

The men scattered to find the galoot in question, but they didn't find him. They circled the oasis, so as to cut into any tracks he might have made; but there were none, save our own, to be found.

So after a while they went back to their blankets, swearing because they had been obliged to leave them, but I remained behind; the man who fired those shots had called me aside and refused to remain on watch unless someone would stay with him. I, unable to sleep, anyway, obviously was elected to be that one.

Still, I was very willing to stay. When we were hunting for that intruder I had observed that there were no bullet marks on the outer walls of the cabin. That meant, of course, that the shots which had gnawed the window sashes had all been fired from the *inside*. Why? What did it mean?

THERE was something very strange in this, something still more strange in the shaken nerves of my companion, whose nerves I should have thought nothing could shake.

I questioned him as tactfully as I could, and when at length he was convinced that he ran no risk of ridicule, he told me what little he knew, his great hands still trembling as he reloaded his six-shooter while he talked.

"I was a-settin' here playin' Canfield," said he, with a wag of his head toward some cards scattered on the earthen floor. "I didn't hear no noise; I dunno what makes me look up. But I do look up, and I sees that face, just outside the winder, lookin' in. White, it was, a snake-belly white; and first-off I think it wears a sort of cap, all in rags, that seems black in the moonshine. Then I see that it ain't a cap. It's the top of his head, knocked to bloody rags, and a lot of it gone."

He shuddered and paused. Reholstering his pistol, he tried to roll a brown-paper cigarette, and succeeded after spilling most of the tobacco. I asked him if he had spoken to the face that he saw. He shook his head.

"Speak to a head without no top to it, a-lookin' in at a winder seven foot from the ground?" he asked me, in return. "Not me! I cut loose with my six-gun. The face kinder twitched, then, like the face of a man that's a-dyin'. I fired again. Then it went."

"Went how?" I inquired. He blew out the match he had lighted.

"Like that," he replied.

It was impossible to believe that he had invented this story. Anyone who knew the man would know also that such a feat was utterly beyond his power. In accordance with a promise I made him, I said nothing to the others of what he had told me; but it was not long before they learned so much that he recounted his tale to them of his own accord.

After leaving the oasis, our work took us down into the Gila Valley, where we met a cow outfit and

camped with it. In the conversation that followed it was but natural that our last stopping-place should be mentioned. Natural also that its history should be known to those cowhands; and they told it to us.

It was one McCooey who first had perceived that the oasis might be turned to profitable uses. Not only could vegetables be grown there, but the spring was never-failing. Water and green stuff would command high prices when sold to smugglers, rustlers and, especially, to desert mining camps that were beginning to spring up.

So McCooey filed a claim on the land that included the oasis and started to build a cabin there. Then a man named Reuben Smith, seeing the promise of this plan, waited until McCooey was oblidged to absent himself from his work in order to earn a grub-stake wherewith to continue it, and proceded to jump the claim.

Smith had complied with all the necessary forms. The oasis now was legally his; but no one knew better than he that this title would be of little use while McCooey lived. Therefore he killed McCooey, but not facing him, giving the "even break" that frontier ethics require, but murdering him treacherously, blowing off the top of his head with a shotgun from behind.

Shortly after that Smith vanished, no one knew how nor where—nor cared. Another man settled on the claim, but only to abandon it, and so did several others. Men, even the border desperados, who camped there once, invariably shunned the place thereafter, and all for the same reason—McCooey had returned, and after his death was holding the land that he could not hold before.

That was the tale that the cowboys told us. They did not claim first-hand knowledge of its truth.

"We ain't lost no spooks—not any—so we ain't lookin' for none," was the way one of them defined their attitude.

They had seen the marks of those bullets, and knew that they all had been fired with never a result that could be seen. This test was sufficient for them; they allowed the matter to go at that.

Afterward I camped again in that cabin. Nothing happened. Why couldn't I have gone into the other room and sat with the man on watch in the first place, as I had thought of doing, instead of standing there in the end of the passage? It was just my luck, that's all. The sort of luck that has never abandoned me in a matter such as this.

BETWEEN that oasis and the scene of the next episode in my attempt to prove or disprove the so-called supernormal, there stretched several thousand miles, both wet and dry.

This scene, like the episode itself, was as unlike all the others as they were unlike each other. Nominally it was even under another flag, for the scene lay in Porto Rico during the Spanish-American War, before the island was ceded to Uncle Sam.

I was a lieutenant of engineers. My company, detached from the regiment, was stationed a little way out of Ponce, on the beautiful military road that leads across the island between that city and San Juan.

Porto Rico was very thickly inhabited, and the great road, its principal thoroughfare, was like a continuous village for nearly its entire length. But to this rule the site of our one-company camp was a notable exception.

Our tents were pitched in an open field, which had borne a most evil reputation as a nocturnal rendezvous for highwaymen. As to the justice of this reputation, we neither knew

nor cared; it was for the highwaymen to do the worrying, if any was done, and we saw nothing of them.

Near this field, facing the road, there was one house, and one only. Plainly, it had been rather a pretentious structure in its day. Though not deserted, its inmates were of the lowest class of whites that the island produces, which is very low indeed. Upon making inquiries of a friendly native who lived near, we learned something about these neighbors and a great deal about the house they inhabited.

It was a peculiar house. Standing as it did on low ground between two small rivers that were liable—as later we discovered—to rise in flood after every storm in the mountains back of us, it was built on arches that raised it eight feet or thereabouts above the ground.

Why so expensive a structure should have been placed on such a site, when so many better ones were available in the immediate vicinity, we could not even guess. Our native friend explained it. It was owing to conflict between an odd streak of vanity and the natural tendencies of a miser's mind.

His name, if I remember aright, was Valdez—but it doesn't matter. One could hardly throw a brick in any Spanish country without danger of injury to some bearer of that name. This one, it seems, was a usurer who, many years before, had gathered a considerable fortune.

But strangely enough, he also cherished social ambitions. He wished to become a landed proprietor and, by foreclosing a mortgage, he gained title to the land upon which our company was then encamped. In similar ways he obtained materials and labor to build his house, which he placed on the least desirable portion of his land, intending to build more houses on the remaining parts, and rent them at a profit.

To this end he called in many loans and, miser-like, he would not entrust the money to any bank. His servants, who were also his debtors and therefore practically his slaves, all knew of this money and all hated the miser. Therefore they murdered him, and, incidentally, did a very bad job for themselves, for they couldn't find the money, and their search delayed them so long that they were taken and executed.

According to the story told us then, and afterward repeated by others, the miser's gold was never found. It was inevitable, especially in a community like that one, that his unquiet spirit would be said to return and haunt the spot where his treasure was hidden. Belief in this story was so general, we were informed, that it accounted for the fact that the field in which we were camped still was unbuilt upon.

APPARENTLY, however, it was not in the house, but under it, that the miser had hidden his gold. Never, according to report, did his ghost appear in the house itself. Had this been otherwise, our undesirable neighbors, who kept a sort of hostelry for outlaws, never would have dared to stay in the place.

As it was, our coming caused their occupation to vanish, so that soon they vanished also, and our guard lines were extended so as to include the house.

After that, we, the company officers, naturally allowed this house and its story to fall into the backgrounds of our minds, and I think that this was also true of the men. Centuries of violence and oppression had made the crop of reputed ghosts so plentiful, and soldiers in an enemy's country have so many other and more important things to think about,

that the miser's spook, to quote one of our sergeants, "got lost in the shuffle." Very soon, however, as the sergeant also said, "it came out in the deal."

Our post was short of commissioned personnel. Officers of the guard we did not have, and I had been acting as Officer of the Day for nearly a week on end, besides attending to my regular work.

It was long after "taps" when I had thrown myself on my cot, fully dressed except for belt and blouse, and fallen asleep instantly. A moment afterward, as it seemed to me, I was roused by the voice of a sentry barking the time-honored challenge:

"Halt! Who is there?"

I sat up and listened. There was no reply. There followed a second challenge; a short pause and then the third and final one:

"Halt—or I fire!"

I was on my feet by this time, running, with my belt in my hand. Before I had taken a dozen steps I heard the crack of the sentry's rifle, and his shout:

"The guard—Number Two! The guard!"

As I sprinted along the company street, our camp began to buzz like an invaded hive, for already the guard bugle was madly sounding "To Arms!" The guard itself, in double time, reached its objective a few seconds before I did.

"Over there—under that house," said the sentry, pointing with his leveled bayonet, in response to a question of the sergeant's. "There was only one man. He had an officer's cape on. He had a lantern, too, but he's put it out, now. He hasn't gone; he must be under the house yet."

It was not a dark night, but the shadows under the house were dark. I knew, really, that it would be impossible for anyone to leave those shadows without being seen by the sentry.

Yet, even after we had surrounded and searched the place, finding nothing except a splash of lead where the sentry's bullet had flattened against some masonry, it never occurred to me that I was on a hot trail in my quest of the unknown. The ground under those arches happened just then to be hard and dry, so that, in any case, no tracks could be seen. This fact, and also the sentry's reference to the intruder's lantern and cloak, threw me off the track, I suppose.

At all events, my only thought was that someone had succeeded in running the guard. I didn't believe that it was an officer because, leaving all other considerations aside, no officer would be likely to wear a heavy circular cape there in the tropics. Neither could I believe that it was one of our own men, playing a practical joke. A joke that causes a false alarm in time of war is an offence punishable by death.

But no matter who it was, the outstanding fact remained the same—this running of the guard must not be allowed to continue. So we detailed extra men, who could ill be spared, for guard duty, and posted one of them in the house itself, and I increased my vigilance, to see that their duty was properly done; for as semi-permanent Officer of the Day, I was responsible for the efficiency of the guard.

FOR several nights thereafter all went well. Then I was sent on detached duty. On my return, which happened to be at night, I might easily have been shot in attempting to enter my own camp. The sentries had stringent orders to fire without a second challenge, but fortunately I answered the first one promptly.

I guessed, of course, what had happened; and my guess was correct. The performance under the arches that supported that old house had twice been repeated, almost without variation. That very night it was repeated for a fourth time. I myself saw it then.

Owing to the conformation of our camping ground, my tent faced the company street; and beyond the foot of this street, abutting on the road, stood the old house. The flaps of my tent were thrown back. I was lying on my cot, looking out at those pillar-supported arches, a hundred and fifty yards away, when the light shone forth.

It was the light of a rather dim lantern, to all appearances. It came from nowhere. That is to say that the lantern—if it was one—was lighted after it had been carried into the deep shadows under the house. Then it moved, passing behind a pillar and emerging, bobbing as it went, as any lantern bobs along when carried by a walking man.

I jumped from my cot and began hastily to pull on a pair of rubber boots over my pajama-legs, but I did it without much enthusiasm. I felt sure that the challenge, the shot and the disappearance of that mysterious light would follow before I could get fairly away. And so they did.

This brought the matter to a head; also to a deadlock. The precautions taken had made it humanly impossible for anyone to make an undetected entrance and a scatheless escape from under those arches, yet that is exactly what was happening, time after time. If those alarms were to continue, we soon would hear of the fact, in no pleasant manner, from our superiors. What were we to do?

Once more the captain and I consulted together. I mentioned the ghostly legend, but I did it in a half-joking manner; I hadn't the courage seriously to bring forward such a theory in that connection. It was received in the way that I advanced it, but nevertheless we went again, in rather a shamefaced manner, to consult our native friend.

"Valdez, the miser?" he asked, in reply to our questions. "He died before I was born, and I never saw him, though many, many times I have seen the light he carries. But my father, in his youth, knew Valdez well; a shriveled old man, who, to guard against the chill dews of evening, always wore a *capote*—even as your sentry described him."

We let it go at that—we could do nothing else. It is possible, of course, that the sentry had heard a description of that long-dead miser before he went on post when the light was first seen, but we had then been for so short a time on the island that this was not at all probable.

No one else, so far as I know, claimed to see the figure. So we, the officers, gave out the tale that this light was undoubtedly a sort of *ignis fatuus*—a floating, globular mass of luminous gas—and that the sentries were to pay it no further attention.

Many times after that I saw the light in question. Many times I tried vainly to entrap it. Had it happened that I was half an hour later in making the rounds on that first night, I would have been close beside the sentry when he shouted his challenge. But my ill luck had held, and the mystery is a mystery still.

THE next episode followed chronologically and occurred in a Spanish-speaking country; but there ends all its connection with, or resemblance to any other. It is not really an experience of my own.

Entirely to accept or wholly to disbelieve the story seem equally impossible, and therein lies its mystery. Its scene was laid, years before I

ever went to South America, in the cathedral of La Paz, the capital city of Bolivia.

In that cathedral there was then, and doubtless there is still, a certain image of the Virgin. Like many other images, it was very rich; a century of votive offerings and offerings of thanks having accumulated to its credit.

Its clothing was sumptuous almost beyond belief. The fingers of its outstretched right hand were literally covered with jeweled rings, all of them enormously valuable and some set with stones that were nearly priceless.

This image was something less than four feet high, so the rings, which originally had been worn on human fingers, were naturally much too large for it. The elevated niche in which the figure stood raised its hand to a distance of something like three yards from the floor. This, and the sanctity of the building, were all that protected the jewels from theft, but hitherto this protection had proved sufficient.

There came to La Paz, however, a half-breed Aymará Indian with more courage and less reverence than his fellows; also—though this was in no way extraordinary—with no sense of honesty at all.

Somewhere or other, this individual procurred a tall office stool, and after midnight walked into the cathedral, which was always open, mounted his stool and prepared to strip off the rings hanging loosely on the image's hand.

Then it was—so the story went—that a miracle intervened. The hand of that image was suddenly endowed with strength and with the power of motion. It caught the wrist of the would-be thief and gripped it fast. He struggled wildly, so that the stool upset; but the grip of the image held fast and the half-breed hung, crazed with terror, shrieking imprecations mingled with frantic prayers for help.

Hours passed, and the time for early mass arrived. Thenceforward news of the miracle spread, and thousands came to see. They had plenty of time to see. It was not until the afternoon was nearly spent that masses which were said and prayers for the thief's forgiveness prevailed.

Finally the grasp of the image relaxed, and the half-breed was allowed to collapse in a heap on the floor to be carried forth, gibbering, by his friends.

THIS is the story that I heard, not once nor twice, but many times, never with any essential variation, from eye-witnesses in all ranks of life. By no possibility could there have been collusion between them, and not by any means were they unanimous in their belief in the miraculous nature of what they had seen.

Some of them, highly-educated, professional men and the like, regarded belief in such a theory as an affront to their intelligence. For the most part, they were inclined to believe that it was a trick prepared to impress the more ignorant natives with the danger of attempting to rob the church.

That was my own notion of the most probable solution at first; and I went to the cathedral expecting to confirm this theory. In other words I intended, if I could, to find out how this supposedly mechanical trick *had* been performed; failing that, to ascertain how it *might* have been done.

As an engineer, I was fully competent to form an adequate judgment in such matters, with the principles of which my profession directly concerned itself. Yet never was there a failure more complete than mine.

The hand supposed to have grip-

ped the wrist of that *cholo* was, like the rest of the figure, made of painted wood. It had no joints. In no way could joints have been concealed.

But even if there had been joints, and if the hand and arm were made of hollow steel, any invisible contrivance that would enable them to grasp the wrist of a man, and to sustain his weight as he hung in the air, would still be a flat, mechanical impossibility. So there we are.

Yet a collective lie on such a scale certainly can hardly be considered a tenable theory. It surely seems as though *something* must have happened. Then what could have happened? And how?

I give it up!

IT WAS a far cry to the next scene—almost halfway around the world, to the Philippines, in "the days of the empire," as the cant phrase went. That is, when the embers of rebellion still were smoldering, very soon after the islands passed into the possession of Uncle Sam.

I was a provincial supervisor. The office was afterward abolished, but in my time it was primarily that of chief engineer of a province, though it also concerned itself with so many matters quite disconnected with engineering that my duties, in their variety, rivaled those of the tuneful Pooh-Bah.

It is maintained, I am told, by those who are supposed to be experts in such matters, that a ghost that manifests itself is invariably the spirit of a person who has died while under the influence of some very strong emotion; and that, more often than not, the person has died a violent death.

If the latter assertion is true, the Philippines should be haunted by a phantom army numerically far greater than those which lined the trenches of Flanders; and in a way it would seem as though this were the case.

Pangasinán was the province of which I had charge. It embraced thirty-seven municipalities and supported more than three hundred thousand inhabitants. My work took me all over the province and brought me into contact with every sort of person who lived there; and though I have been in many lands where belief in the so-called supernatural was general, never have I known another in which it was so universal or so complete.

This was true of all natives, from the highly educated professional man—and there were more of them than most people realize—down to the laborer who earned fifteen cents a day in the paddy-fields. They would mention some being of this nature in exactly the same manner that they would speak of a neighbor, whom one had never seen, but whose existence nobody would dream of doubting; and the variety of these beings was infinite.

There was, for example, the *cofré*, who lived in the church-tower of Lingayén, the provincial capital. This being, it seemed, was a sprite in the form of a man, about twenty feet high. It was not malignant; only mischievous—a sort of overgrown Puck, formerly much given to nocturnal pranks upon unwary passers-by.

Its residence in that tower had lasted for something more than a century, and the passing years had somewhat tamed its jocular propensities in all respects save one; if the church bells were not tied up, this creature would ring them wildly at night, so that no one who lived near the church could sleep.

Of course this sounds like a tale for children, and so, very likely, it was. Yet it was believed by the grown men who told it.

Once I heard a wild midnight peal-

ing of those bells; and few things in the world are more certain than that no native would dare invade that tower after dark. I went to investigate, but found neither the *cofré* nor anything else, except dust and bats; and the ringing stopped just as I arrived.

In front of this church stood the gallows, used by the army for the execution of natives. Directly across the little park, before the *presidencia* —that is, the City Hall—was the scaffold and fixed chair for the *garrote*, used for the same purpose by the civil authorities.

Both were said to be haunted, especially the latter; for the first man put to death by the old Spanish method under American law was innocent. But I never could see anything of these ghosts, try as I might. And I tried hard.

These, however, were commonplace failures, but it certainly does seem as though, with any luck at all, one at least of the next three incidents should have ended in success in that quest of mine. Perhaps one of them did meet with some measure of success; but if so, the measure was a very small and unsatisfactory one.

IT HAPPENED one night when I was alone in my house which, like all houses in that region, was built on stilts. I was figuring out the strains of a bridge that I intended to build. This was work that needed all my attention, so that a noise as of scratching that began to make itself heard bothered me greatly.

It was like the gnawing of a mouse, which at first I took it to be, and therefore stamped my foot so as to frighten the mouse into silence; but the noise continued. So I rose and went to investigate.

The sounds came from under a massive old Spanish sideboard, standing on legs that raised it a foot or more above the floor. Taking a lamp with a powerful reflector, I knelt and looked under it. All this time that queer scratching continued, and now I could see what made it; but even in that strong light I could not decide what that something was.

It had no legs, and no other visible means of motion; yet it moved continually. It was very small. In appearance, it was exactly like the bony end of a skeleton's finger. Just that one little bone, with nothing else near it, moving by itself, in some manner that I could not understand, study the thing as I might and did.

Touch it I dared not. The tropics are full of stinging creatures, many of which were unknown to me and I fancied that this might be one of them. So I got a *bolo*—that is, a sort of heavy, native sword—and raising it as high as the bottom of the sideboard would permit, brought it down with all my might on that thing.

The cut fell true. I could feel the impact of the keen edge as it struck that thing, but I could see—nothing. There was nothing to be seen. That thing, whatever it was, had vanished like the flame of a puffed-out candle, leaving behind it no fragments, no smear on the floor—nothing, save a nick in the *bolo's* edge.

There was no chance for it, or for even the tiniest insect, to get through the floor. The floor was made of closely fitted mahogany planks, each one more than a foot wide, and all polished to a mirror-like surface by generations of bare feet that had shuffled over them.

Yet, in order to make assurance doubly sure, I took the lamp, and going outdoors, looked under the house. Rain had fallen, and the tracks of any creature would have been instantly visible in that smooth mud. But there were no tracks.

When my servants returned I complained to them that something had made a scratching noise that dis-

turbed me, but said nothing more. They did not speak enough Spanish to make themselves understood on any but the most ordinary domestic topics.

But they nodded understandingly, and pointing to the tips of their own fingers, said *"muerto"* — that is, "dead"—and let it go at that. A little thing like a vanishing finger-bone apparently was the merest commonplace to them.

So it was to the neighbors whom I cautiously questioned. All of them knew what the servants knew, but knew no more. If there was a story connected with the thing, I never could learn what it was.

So that is where what was perhaps my nearest near-success left me, with nothing to show for it except a *bolo* with a single nick in its edge, which hangs on my wall.

"THE BRIDGE OF THE PRIEST," where my next attempt to meet a ghost fairly was made, spanned a stream that ran through a *barrio* of Lingayén. A *barrio*, be it understood, is a village that forms part of a larger town.

If, for instance, New York City were situated in the Philippines—which heaven forbid!—Manhattan would be what is called the *poblacion*, while Brooklyn, Richmond, Queens and the other boroughs would be *barrios*.

The bridge was a single-arch affair of beautiful old Spanish masonry, the crown of which, in the course of two centuries or thereabouts, had been almost worn through. To repair it so that it ought to last for another two centuries was a very simple matter.

In order to impede traffic as little as possible, I sent a gang of workmen to the bridge at nightfall, so that the repairs might be finished by dawn. Soon after the gang started I mounted and rode after it, to make sure that its work was properly begun.

On my arrival I was met by the *teniente* of the *barrio*, a personage whose office very roughly corresponds with that of a borough president. He was attended by a deputation of leading citizens, all wearing their best shirts—as usual, with the tails flying free—and also an air of deep concern.

I invited them to tell me their trouble; and after presenting me with a cigar of super-excellent quality, and not very much smaller than a toy baseball bat, they did so.

It was this notion of repairing the bridge at night that disturbed them, it seemed. To work at night obviously was contrary to nature, and therefore wrong; but what was more—far more—important in the present case, it would discommode *el señor fraile*—in other words, "the mister priest." They were sure that it would displease him very much indeed.

This puzzled me greatly. To the best of my knowledge there were only two priests in the entire province; and their home, to which they stuck closely, was far away from that *barrio*, in the immediate vicinity of a battalion of United States Infantry.

This prudence of theirs was owing to the fact that during the recent insurrection all other priests had been captured by their erstwhile parishioners, cut up into unpleasantly small pieces and then dropped into the Agno, or any other stream that was conveniently near.

I mentioned this. The *teniente* and the deputation shook their heads vehemently; I hadn't grasped their meaning at all. The "mister priest" of whom they spoke hadn't been killed in this manner. He couldn't be; he had died of his own accord in the year 1760.

Almost every day since that time he had returned to smoke a cigarette in the cool of the evening while lean-

ing against the parapet of that bridge. It had grown to be a habit of his, with which he certainly would resent any interference. Therefore, our outlandish intention of working at night was most deplorable. Really, it wouldn't do at all!

NATURALLY, my interest instantly became keen. Had they ever seen this ghostly priest? I asked. They "registered" wearily tolerant impatience.

Seen him? Weren't they just telling me? They had seen him pretty much every evening of their lives, and so had their parents and grandparents before them. Afraid of him? No. Why should they be? So long as he was let alone, he harmed nobody, but, on the contrary, brought good fortune to the village and its inhabitants, so that they all would regard it as a disaster if he were displeased.

That settled the matter. Except in cases of absolute necessity, I must never offend against native prejudices or customs; orders from headquarters in Manila were most stringent in that respect. So the work was done in daylight, for which the inhabitants of the *barrio* appeared to be exceedingly grateful, and I think they really were—am sure of it.

I am sure, that is, that they honestly wished that my desire to see this specter should be gratified, and honestly regretful, also astonished, that my repeated visits with that end in view were always unsuccessful.

They had absolutely no motive for insincerity. I had every means of discovering such a motive, had any existed; and I went into the matter exhaustively. But even if the motive did exist could every man, woman and child in a village of considerable size, have sustained such a fiction for two long years? Would the citizens of the *poblacion*, many of them men of education and standing, corroborate this tale unhesitatingly and as a matter of course, if they had disbelieved it?

One's choice, then, lies between two hypotheses. Either there was something in the semblance of a priest which frequented that bridge, or else a successful conspiracy of deception was continued without motive for years on end by some thousands of people of all ranks and several races. To me it does not seem difficult to choose the more credible hypothesis of the two.

IT WAS not long before two more unquiet spirits appeared, or were said to appear, to many men, but not to me. In my mind there had been no room for this purely academic quest of mine; an unseen enemy was slaying hundreds of my people every day, and I was fighting it as best I could. Yet I missed the sight—for there can be no doubt that there was a sight of some sort—by a matter of seconds only, and very few seconds at that.

It was the Asiatic cholera, which had come from China to Manila, and thence to our province of Pangasinán. As yet it had appeared in one of our towns only, where it blazed up with the sudden fierceness of a prairie fire. Desperately we labored to keep the scourage from spreading. We surrounded the *poblacion* with a ring of armed men, while we did what we could to stamp out the pestilence within.

As Provincial Pooh-Bah, I was in charge, of course. I had commandeered the City Hall—the *presidencia*, that is to say—as a detention camp. The schoolhouse was serving as a hospital, and both were overflowing; for though that town of San Carlos never had boasted thirty thousand inhabitants, the daily death-list already had passed four hundred and still was mounting.

We had one doctor and no nurses.

There were no medicines and no disinfectants. Manila had used up all there were on the islands, and a destroyer, sent rushing under forced draught for a fresh supply, had not yet returned.

Long before, I had been told that the old convent, in which I had established my headquarters, was haunted by the gaunt and sinister wraith of a wicked priest, who had met a tragic death within its walls about a century before.

Wholly unlike the beneficent presence that lounged away its evenings on the bridge, this spectre, gliding through those long, bare corridors, retained the character that it bore when living, intensified by the rage and hatred that were its last earthly emotions.

All this, however, had slipped for the time into my mental discard. There was no time to think of any such things. The outlook was very dismal for us.

Especially dismal did it seem to me. All day the rain had been falling in steady, purposeful streams, and the roads were stagnant rivers of molasses-like mud. I had a bad attack of *dengué* fever, so that every movement felt as though it would wrench me apart.

The inhabitants of a certain *barrio* of San Carlos had been practically wiped out, so far as its inhabitants were concerned, by the epidemic, and it was discovered that this was principally due to an infected well that served the entire village. So I ordered the few survivors into the detention camp and then—for I had no other means of disinfecting them—burned all the houses but one, which had miraculously escaped harboring a case of the disease. In this house I had stationed a man upon whom I thought I could depend, with orders to watch that infected well, and allow no one to approach it.

IT WAS probably a light touch of fever that afflicted him with a raging thirst during the night. At all events, the torture of that thirst—and there are few, if any, worse tortures—was more than he could endure. He drank deep of the clear, cool, poisonous water of that well, and the inevitable result followed swiftly.

When I splashed up to headquarters and dismounted, drenched and wearied almost into coma after nearly fifteen hours in the saddle, I met there a native cart, drawn by a *carabáo;* and in it was my man, in the last, ghastly stages of cholera. I wouldn't send him to the native hospital, so I had him carried inside the convent. Twenty minutes later he died.

One disposes of the dead quickly in that climate and those circumstances. Leaving our one doctor to do what had to be done in this connection, I went upstairs—the convent, unlike most other buildings in the Philippine provinces, had two stories—and rolled into my cot.

My door, standing widely ajar, opened into a corridor, long and wide, along which a sentry, a native policeman, walked his beat. At one end hung an old-fashioned locomotive headlight, brilliantly illuminating the corridor from end to end. Opening from the end farthest from me was the guard-room, containing thirty or more policemen and their native officers.

Dog-tired though I was, I couldn't sleep. The barefooted sentry moved as noiselessly as a shadow, but there were other sounds. The rain on the palm-leaves, for example, was like the rolling of muffled drums that never stopped.

Also I was listening for and dreading another sound, and presently it came—the popping crackle of burning bamboo, that no one can distinguish, at a little distance, from the

rattle of rifle-fire. It came from a field, where it was used as kindling to start the pyres upon which, at stated intervals each day and night, we burned the bodies of which we could not otherwise safely dispose.

It was a ghastly proceeding of course, but hitherto it had been wholly impersonal; merely a disagreeable necessity. Now it was more than that. I had liked the man whose body, I knew, would be among those laid on that huge pyre. He was a character, a down-East Yankee, of pure colonial stock, with all the virtues and prejudices of his Puritan ancestors.

As such, his dislike and contempt for the Philippines and Filipinos, climate, customs and everything concerning them, was complete and abysmal. His one desire, often expressed, was to return to the sterile acres upon which his boyhood, not so long passed, had been spent. It seemed hard that he should have to die like this.

WAKEFUL and feeling very low in my mind, I was thinking of this and wishing that I could sleep, when a wild yell—a piercing shriek that expressed the very agony of terror—brought me out of bed with a spring that landed me in the middle of the floor, gripping a pistol, though how it got into my hand I could never recall. Other screams followed the first one, then a burst of wailing chatter, and afterward, silence.

I ran out into the corridor. The pitilessly bright beam of that headlight revealed every corner of its clean, whitewashed emptiness, which the sentry's presence somehow served to emphasize.

He was crouched against a wall, one hand still grasping the single-barreled shotgun with which the municipal police were armed, the other forearm held across his face, with the gesture that a frightened child might use in hiding its eyes from something that it feared to see.

I sprinted on without pausing until I reached the guard-room door. There I came to a halt and looked in. Rarely, I think, has any guard-room presented such a spectacle of indiscipline. Certainly I hope that never again may I behold one. Yet it was plain to any practiced eye that perfectly good discipline had been holding sway a very short time before.

The men off post had been at rest, as they should have been; the orderly rows of their *petates*—sleeping mats—spread on the floor showed that. Their arms and equipments were in the racks. Their lieutenant still sat at the table on which lay the guard book. But the men themselves—that was another matter!

They were piled—literally piled—in one corner of the room, leaning against the wall and each other, with their faces hidden, for all the world as so many umbrellas might lean—except that umbrellas, when they are leaned in corners, don't shiver nor breathe with the tremolo stop pulled out as far as it will come. At another time the sight might have been funny, but I was in no humor then to enjoy broad burlesque, especially when it concerned itself with a matter of such vital importance as the guard.

Puzzled and angry, I caught the nearest man by the scruff of his neck and yanked him out of the pile. He gave a feeble gasp, and sank to his knees, as though his legs were too weak to support him. I cuffed his ears and again he gasped, but this time with joyful relief because—as I afterward discovered—he knew then that what touched him indubitably was a human hand.

At the time all that I knew or cared was the fact that boxing the men's ears, good and hard, brought them to themselves. Liberal applica-

tions of this treatment brought results after a little. Then I took the officer aside and questioned him.

He, the lieutenant, was a man of much higher grade in every way than those under him. He alone had succeeded, by dint of a supreme effort, in retaining some measure of self-control. Yet even so, his swarthy skin was ghastly, and he trembled anew at the bare recollection of the tale that he had to tell.

"You know, Señor Inspector, of Padre Marina, the priest who died so long ago, but who still walks these corridors," said he, in Spanish. "In his day this priest was an evil and violent man, who hated many things, but his hatred of a heretic was stronger than any other hate. It is but natural that he should resent the presence of Americans in this convent. So when the man who died but just now returned here, doubtless to see you——"

"Do you mean to tell me that you—and all the others—just saw *two* ghosts?" I broke in.

"Two," he replied gravely, and then went on with his story, to which I listened without interrupting him again.

THAT was the burden of his tale. The ghosts of the old Spaniard and the young American had met in that corridor. He, the lieutenant, had heard the sentry's scream, and before he could rise from his chair had seen the two forms as they passed the open guard-room door.

They were fighting — struggling fiercely. Their lips moved; clearly they hurled curses at each other. No two living men could be more plainly visible, yet not a sound did they make.

That was the worst, the most terrifying aspect of the whole affair—that horrible silence. Curses and scuffling feet and panting breath that could be seen, but not heard. They passed the door, and in doing so passed from the lieutenant's field of view. Then I appeared.

I questioned the other men there, one by one. Their stories, in all essentials, were identical. I wanted to know where the figures first appeared and in what manner they vanished, but nobody could tell me. All admitted frankly that they were much too badly scared to notice details of that sort. So there the matter had to rest.

Is it possible that the spirits of two men, fundamentally antagonistic, could meet and grapple after death? Any question of collusion, in the circumstances or of deliberate deception is childish foolishness. Therefore, if the possibility just stated is denied, what did happen?

Personally, I simply don't know. I can't even guess.

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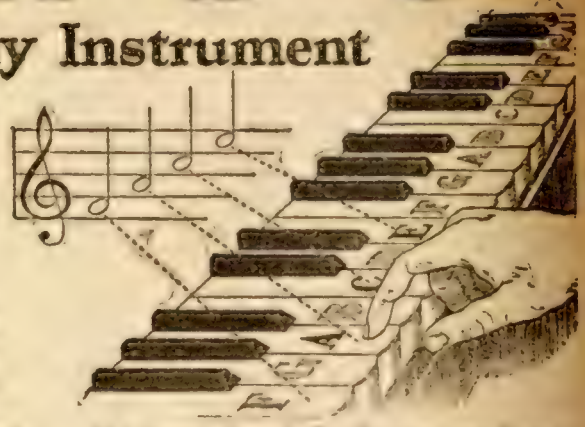

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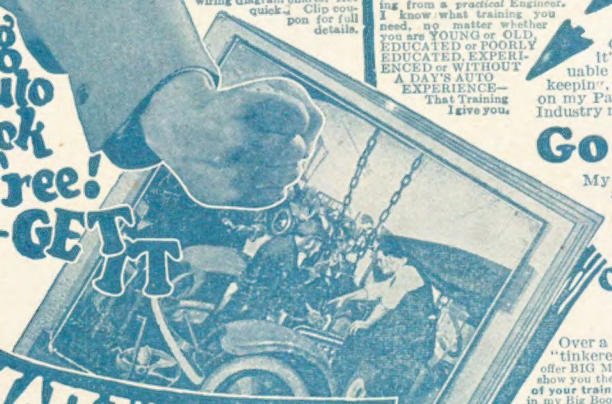

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My Fatal Mistake

That night at the hotel dance I learned a lesson. The first couple that caught my eye was Grace and Harry—but what a different Harry! His slick hair and dapper manner seemed to fit the picture perfectly. And how easily—how faultlessly he danced!

"Aren't you going to ask me to dance?" Grace called gaily to me.

I flushed, realizing I couldn't dance a step. "Why, I—I'd love to, but——"

"All right," Grace broke in, "the next dance is yours."

Before I could speak the orchestra started to play—a dreamy oriental tune. Grace stood waiting. I could feel Harry's smirking eyes on me. I made a wild stab. "I'm sorry—but I can't tango."

"That's a waltz!" Grace laughed.

"I don't waltz either," I faltered, realizing I had made a faux pas—a blunder.

"I don't think you want to dance with me at all," she flashed. Before I could explain further, she and Harry had glided away. I stumbled out of the ball room. Grace's last words—"I'll never speak to you again!" were ringing in my ears.

Why I Never Made Friends

That night I was mighty blue. Why couldn't I make a hit with the girls like the other fellows did? Girls liked me at first but later they went off with fellows who took them dancing. That was my weak point—I could never be popular unless I learned to dance. I had heard of a new way to learn—at home, without music or teacher. Arthur Murray, America's foremost dancing instructor, had perfected this method. I sent for his free booklet and test lesson.

The booklet came promptly and I read it through without stopping. Here was just what I needed. I tried the test lesson and was amazed at the ease with which I was able to master the steps. The lessons were so clear, so simple. I grew confident—eager to dance to music and a real partner.

An Exciting Night

I continued learning so I could attend the coming mask ball at the hotel.

What an exciting night that was! I danced with many partners, keeping perfect time, gliding around the floor like a professional! Midnight found me dancing with a charming creature in a soft, clinging costume.

"Where did you learn to dance so divinely?" she murmured. She was masked but her voice thrilled me strangely. Later I told her the whole story—How I met a beautiful girl and lost her in a day—how wretched I felt—how I learned to dance in my own room.

She caught my hand. "Oh, I'm sorry——" Her voice broke—the voice that thrilled me so strangely. I brushed aside her mask. Imagine my wonder—surprise—joy! It was Grace who was smiling up at me!

What wonderful times we had together after that. We went everywhere—parties, balls and dances. No longer was I a gloomy wallflower, envying others. I was throbbing with new life, new popularity, acclaimed as a faultless dancer wherever I went. The day I wrote to Arthur Murray was certainly the luckiest in my life.

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